The Hebdomian Way

The Hebdomadary

The Sevenfold Seeking And Noesis Of The Hebdomian Way

The Alchemical Star Game

Enantiodromia and The Reformation of The Individual

Hermetica And Alchemy

366 ARG. IN MERCVR. TRIS.

uinæ mentis nunquam infundicur animę, nisi ipsa, ceu luna ad solem, ad dei mentem penitus conuertantur. Non conuertitur ad mentem anima, nisi cùm ipsa quoque fit mens. Mens verò non prius fit, quàm deceptiones sensuum, & phantasiæ nebulas deposuerit. Hac de causa Mercurius modò sensus, & phantasiæ caligines exuit, in aditum mentis se reuocans: mox Pimander, id est mens diuina, in hunc influit, vnde ordinem rerum omnium, & in deo existẽtium, & ex deo manantium, contemplatur. Demum quæ diuino sunt numine reuelata, cæteris hominibus explicat. Is igitur est libri titulus, id propositum illius, & ordo. Tu verò Cosme felix, lege feliciter, ac diu viue, vt & diu patria viuat.

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MERCVRII TRISMEGISTI LIBER DE POTESTATE ET Sapientia Dei, cui titulus

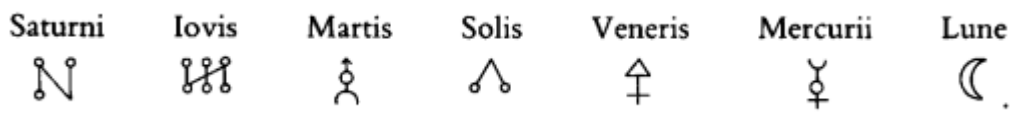
PIMANDER.

Marsilio Ficino Florentino interprete.

CVm de rerum natura cogitarem, ac mentis aciem ad superna erigerem, sopitis iam corporis sensibus, quẽadmodum accidere solet his, qui ob saturitatem vel defatigationem somno grauati sunt, subitò mihi visus sum cernere quendam immensa magnitudine corporis, qui me nomine vocans, in hunc modum clamaret: Quid est ô Mercuri, quod & audire, & intueri desideras? quid est, quod discere, atque intelligere cupis? Tum ego, Quisnam es inquã? Sum, inquit ille, Pimander, mens diuinæ potẽtiæ, ac tu vide quid velis, ipse verò tibi vbique adero. Cupio, inquam, rerum naturam discere, deumque cognoscere. Ad hæc ille: Tua me mente complectere, & ego te in cunctis, quæ optaris, erudiam. Cum hæc dixisset, mutauit formam, & repente omnia subitò reuelauit. Cernebã enim immen

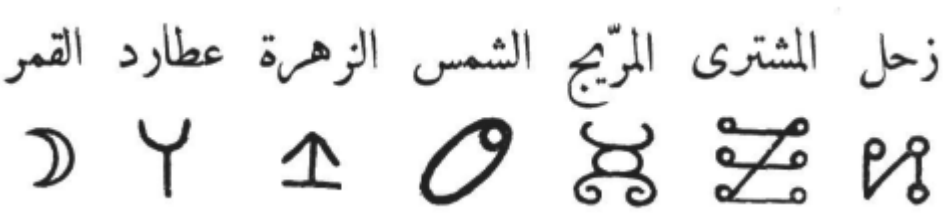
The Hebdomadary

The term Hebdomadary in the context of the Hebdomian Way refers to the individual who is undertaking an esoteric journey or quest (ἄνοδος) for Lapis Philosophicus by means of following the path that is the Hebdomian Way. The Way consists of seven stages which ancient hermetic tradition symbolized by the seven classical planets beginning with Lune, the Moon, and ending with Saturni, Saturn:



The illustration above is from a copy of the Latin text known as the Picatrix and which Latin texts date from c.1300 - c.1459 CE, with a manuscript in the British Library known as Sloane MS 3679 providing a useful summary of the text, a table of contents, and a listing of the seven planets.

The Latin Picatrix derives from a Spanish translation of an earlier Arabic text known as Ghayat al-hakim (c.1050 CE) where the seven planets are symbolized thus:



The seven stages were symbolized in various ways in later texts, such as in the book *Azoth Sive Aureliae Occultae Philosophorum* published in 1613 CE which included the following illustration using planetary symbols still in use:

The above illustration also includes (in the lower triangle) the sigils of the three fundamental alchemical substances, Sulphur, Salt, and Mercury, whose combinations provide Azoth, the living water of life, illustrated in colour in the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, {1} an 18th century manuscript containing an English translation of *De Alchimia Opuscula Complura Veterum Philosophorum* published in 1550 CE. {2}

The Hermetic Quest And Pathei-Mathos

The hermetic quest was described in terms of a journey, the progression, from the first, lower, sphere to the seventh, higher, sphere in the Ποιμάνδρης (Poemander/Pymander/Poemandres) tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, written in Hellenistic Greek, and which dates from between c. 100 and 230 CE.

καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾶι λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῆι πρώτηι ζώνηι δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῆι δευτέραι τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆι τρίτηι τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆι τετάρτηι τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἁπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῆι πέμπτηι τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῆι ἕκτηι τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῆι ἑβδόμηι ζώνηι τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.

"Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait." {3}

In the Hebdomian Way the seven spheres are as anciently named and in the sequence Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, with each sphere associated with a pathei-mathos, πάθει μάθος, where by pathei-mathos in the context of the Hebdomian Way is meant a personal learning from or a personal discovery due to a particular and practical experience.

What is learned is germane to the individual, but the fundamental aim of each learning experience, each task, is to develop the faculties, both physical and perceiverational, of the individual with the perceiverational faculties including insight, rational understanding, and empathy. Thus, the task, the learning experience, of the stage associated with the sphere of the Sun involves the perceiveration of one's own physis (φύσις) - our character, persona, psyche, being, nature - and the perceiveration of the physis of Nature and of the κόσμος (cosmic order) beyond, and thus of the connexion between one's own physis to (α) Nature, to the living beings, (emanations) of Nature on our planet including other human beings, and to (ω) the Kosmos beyond, and which Kosmos includes (i) other star-systems in our Galaxy and the planets around some of those stars and the possible living beings (life-forms) on some of those planets, and (ii) the billions of other Galaxies with their star-systems and planets and possible life-forms.

This personal learning by means of a graded journey of seven stages each of which stages involve asuggested practical task is all that is involved in the Hebdomian Way. There is thus no initiation, ritualized or otherwise; no ceremonies or rituals Occult or otherwise, and no named Grades such as the one which some Occult praxises term 'Adept'.

The quest, or progression along the Way, is simply the natural change, the evolution, which can occur in the physis of the individual by means of undertaking the suggested tasks in the suggested order.

Philosophical And Hermetic Foundations Of The Hebdomian Way

The Hebdomian Way is based on two philosophical principles. The first, deriving from hermeticism and alchemy, is that there is an inner - an esoteric, batin {4} - nature to Being and to we human beings which is not perceptible to our physical senses and which cannot be discovered by the experimental method of science.

The second principle, also hermetic and alchemical, is that this inner nature can be apprehended, or represented, by a particular symbolism or by various symbolisms and also by the relationships between symbols, because of the Aristotelian principle that existence/reality is a reasoned order (κόσμος) capable of being rationally understood, with human beings in their natural state of physis (φύσις) - or fitrah - an eikon (εἰκὼν) of that ordered structure.

Hence Marsilii Ficini in his *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* writing in 1489 CE that:

"Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona."

"How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presenced therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned." {5}

Which is a re-expression of the hermetic principle quod est inferius est sicut quod est superius (what is above is as what is below) from a Latin version (Liber Hermetis de alchimia) of a commentary on the Arabic alchemical text *al-Lawh al-Zumurrud*, The Emerald Table. {6}

As Ficini goes on to explain – Est igitur non solum corporeus, sed vitae insuper et intelligentiae particeps. Quamobrem praeter corpus hoc mundi sensibus familiariter manifestum latet in eo spiritus corpus quoddam excedens caduci sensus capacitatem – the world/kosmos (mundus) and by extension we ourselves as part of the kosmos are not only material (corporeal) but also imbued with the vitae (Life; Being; ψυχή) and the intelligentiae (apprehension) of that which is above; and that beyond obvious outer appearances there is a hidden, an inner, animating (spiritus) aspect which our 'lower', more mundane, senses are unaware of.

Hermeticism And Alchemy

Alchemy, al-χημία (from χῡμεία) is the flowing, the changing; and the secret, or esoteric, alchemy was often understood not as a transformation, a changing, of inert, lifeless, substances (metallic, chemical or otherwise) but as the transformation, the changing, of the alchemist: as a type of symbiosis between the alchemist and the substances (ὕλη) or materia being used such as the living ones associated with a particular septenary sphere or several or all of the spheres, and which living materia in Arabic texts included the Ruhaniyyat - celestial beings - associated with the

seven spheres and the human-made imago - "a semblance"- by which an individual can re-present them and which representations include sigils.

This alchemical symbiotic transformation was arguably first described in the Ποιμάνδρης tractate: as the quest, ἄνοδος, through the seven spheres and thus as the desire to both know/discover the physis of beings, νοῆσαι τὴν τού των φύσιν, and to acquire knowledge of, to know, the theos, γνῶναι τὸν θεόν, where the theos is later described as ἀρρενόθηλυς, both male-and-female. In the same tractate it is written that there are seven celestial διοικητάς:

> "Theos, the perceiveration, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiveration, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate." Poemandres, v. 9, translated Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum*, op.cit

Thus, the Hebdomadary could be considered as a modern alchemist in the hermetic tradition.

The Seven Oxonians
2021 CE

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{1} MS Ferguson 210, University of Glasgow Library.

{2} A copy of *De Alchimia Opuscula Complura Veterum Philosophorum* is available at https://books.google.co.uk /books?id=SQ9Non4XspUC [Accessed November 2021]

{3} Poemandres, v. 25, translated by D. Myatt , *Corpus Hermeticum, Eight Tractates*, 2017, https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf. It should be noted that Myatt reads (with several of the MSs) ὑπερηφανίαν not προφανίαν.

Myatt's commentary on the Poemandres tractate explains much about Hellenic hermeticism and which hermeticism arguably influenced the much later Arabic Ghayat al-hakim.

{4} The term batin and the following term fitrah are taken from Islamic philosophy.

{5} The translation is by Myatt, from his commentary on section 2 of tractate IV in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates,* op.cit.

{6} The title refers to a precious jewel - emerald - and recalls the meaning of Lapis in the alchemical term Lapis Philosophicus. Incidently, Zumurrud is a female character in two of the stories from the Persian/Arabic tales known in the West as *The Thousand And One Nights*. She is from Samarkand with her full name being "emerald from Samarkand".

Image credit:

Page from the 1577 (CE) book Iamblichvs De mysteriis Ægyptiorvm, Chaldæorum, Assyriorum: Proclvs in Platonicum Alcibiadem de anima, atque dæmone, Idem De sacrificio & magia: Porphyrivs De diuinis atq, dæmonib: Psellvs De dæmonibus: Mercvrii Trismegisti Pimander, Eiusdem Asclepius.
The book contains the Latin text of the Corpus Hermeticum by Marsilius Ficinus.

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The Sevenfold Seeking And Noesis Of The Hebdomian Way

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I. The Sevenfold Seeking.
II. Noesis And The Star Game.
III. The Noetic Star Game.
  The Moves.
  Initial Placement.
  The Objective.
IV. The Seven Stages.
  The Overcoming.
  The Tasks.
Footnotes.

Seven Oxonians
March 2022 ev
v. 1.03

Image Credit:
The Horae (ὧραι)
Attic red-figure vase, c. 500-450 BCE
Antikensammlung, Berlin

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I. The Sevenfold Seeking

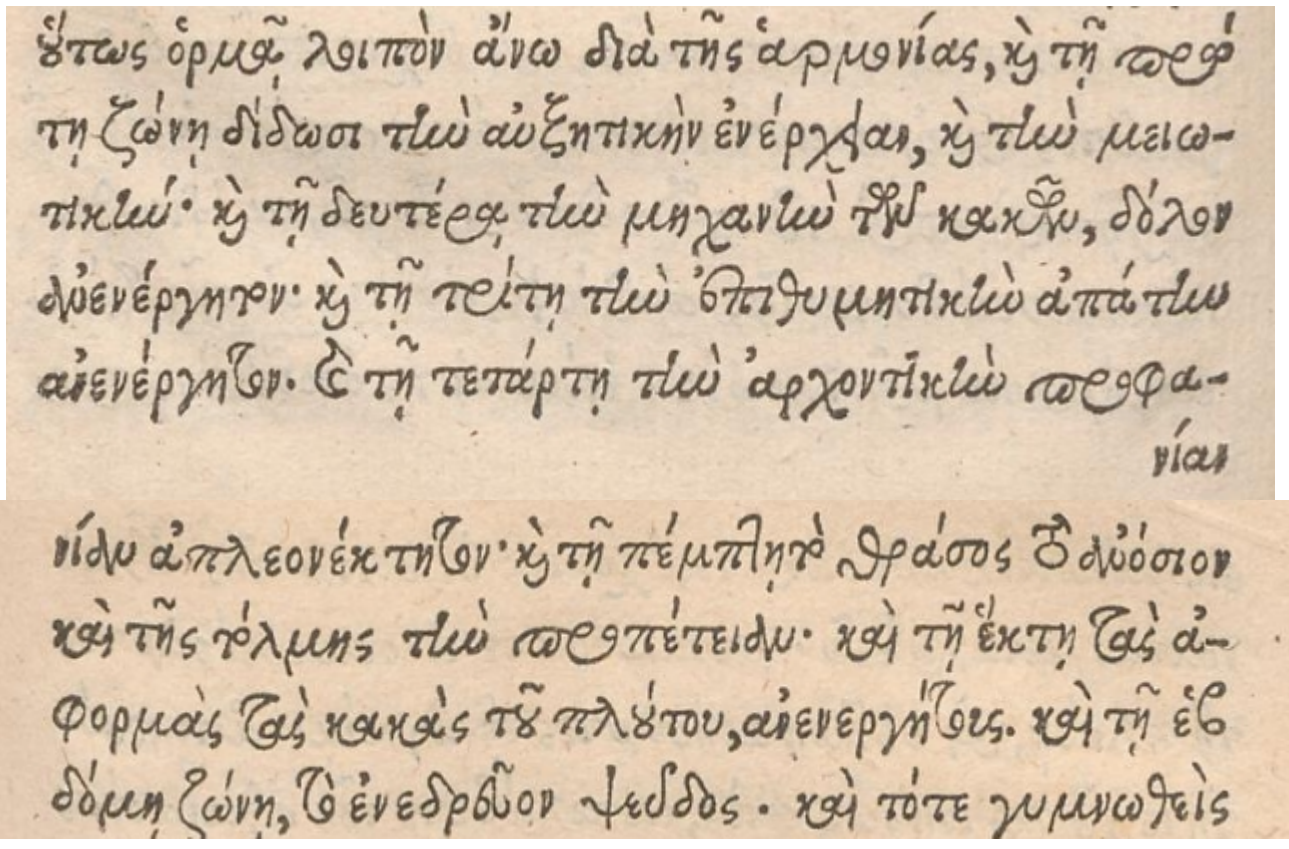
The Hebdomian Way is a modern hermetic ἐπιστήμη, épistémé: a means to change the φύσις, physis - the character/nature/perception - of an individual by practical means involving a seeking or quest; which seeking derives from ancient hermeticism and which practical means, as the term hebdomian implies, involves seven stages with the goal being the discovery of wisdom understood in hermetic terms as a balanced, rational, personal judgement and a particular knowledge of a paganus kind concerning livings beings, human nature, Nature, the Cosmic Order (κόσμος) and our connexion to such emanations of what has been variously termed Being, The-Unity, The One-The Only (τὸ ἓν), and The Monas (μονάς).

This sevenfold seeking (ἄνοδος) for wisdom - to "learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings, and to have knowledge of the theos", Μαθεῖν θέλω τὰ ὄντα καὶ νοῆσαι τὴν τούτων φύσιν καὶ γνῶναι τὸν θεόν - has been described and written about, in the cultures of European lands, for around two thousand years beginning with the text of the Ποιμάνδρης (Poemandres) tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum written between c.100 and c.230 ev from which the foregoing quotation is taken, with ὁ θεός, the theos, variously understood over the centuries: from the pagan *the* divinity, the chief /divinity/god such as Zeus in ancient Greek mythoi; to the μονὰς and the τὸ ἓν (Monas and The One-The Only) of Hermeticism, of the Gnostics, and of some alchemists of Renaissance Europe; to the monotheistic God/Allah of Christian and Muslim theologists and other alchemists; to more modern non-theological interpretations as Being, the source of beings. {1}

The sevenfold manner of this seeking, this anados through the seven spheres of the 'harmonious, ordered, structure',

{2} is described in the Poemandres tractate in the following terms:

> καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾷ λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τετάρτῃ τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῇ πέμπτῃ τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῇ ἕκτῃ τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ ζώνῃ τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.
>
> "Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait." Poemandres, v. 25, translated by D. Myatt {3}


ὅτως ὁρμᾷ λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῇ πρώ-
τῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν, καὶ τὴν μειω-
τικήν· καὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον
ἀνενέργητον· καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην
ἀνενέργητον· καὶ τῇ τετάρτῃ τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφα-
νίαν
ἀπλεονέκτητον· καὶ τῇ πέμπτῃ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον
καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν· καὶ τῇ ἕκτῃ τὰς ἀ-
φορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου, ἀνενεργήτους· καὶ τῇ ἑβ
δόμῃ ζώνῃ, τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος· καὶ τότε γυμνωθεὶς

Ερμού του Τρισμεγίστου Ποιμάνδρης Ασκληπιού ΄Οροι προς ΄Αμμονα Βασιλέα
1554 ev. pp.8-9

In modern terms, the human traits described as being 'offered up' (δίδωμι) during the sevenfold seeking are:

° 1. That vigour - enthusiasm - which grows and which fades.
° 2. Those dishonourable machinations.
° 3. That eagerness which deceives.
° 4. The arrogance of authority over others.
° 5. Profane insolence and reckless haste.
° 6. The bad inclinations occasioned by a comfortable life-style.
° 7. The lies that lie in wait.

What is noticeable is that in the Poemandres text the stages, the seven spheres of the harmonious structure, are not assigned names (denotata) or designated by 'grades' or associated with the seven classical planets Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. Such associations were later developments as was this sevenfold seeking for wisdom being described as the quest for Lapis Philosophicus understood as the attainment by an individual of wisdom. {4}

Such an association with those named planets inevitably, given the nature of gnosticism, hermeticism, and alchemy, led over the centuries - as Evola noted {5} - to diverse arrangements for their order.

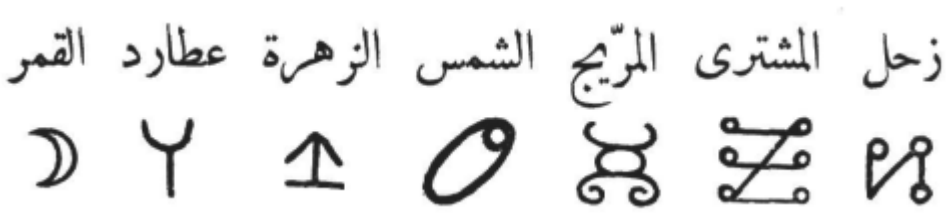
One such arrangement was:

Azoth Sive Aureliae Occultae Philosophorum, 1613 ev. p. 57

Another, depicted as a living tree and on the title page, was:

Azoth Sive Aureliae Occultae Philosophorum, 1613 ev.

One of the oldest illustrated arrangements, so far discovered, is that given in the Arabic text Ghayat al-hakim dating from c.1050 ev where the named spheres are in the order (if read from right to left) Saturn-Jupiter-Mars-Sun-Venus-Mercury-Moon:



Furthermore, Cicero in Book VI of his De Re Publica - a section commonly known as Somnium Scipionis - written at least a century before the text of the Poemandres tractate and over a thousand years before Ghayat al-hakim, mentions the seven spheres in the following order: Saturn-Jupiter-Mars-Sun-Venus-Mercury-Moon. Which is a descending order from the supreme deity to the embedded constant stars to the seven spheres below them. {6}

Which descending arrangement is reversed in many Renaissance texts including the following which helpfully numbers them from 1-7:

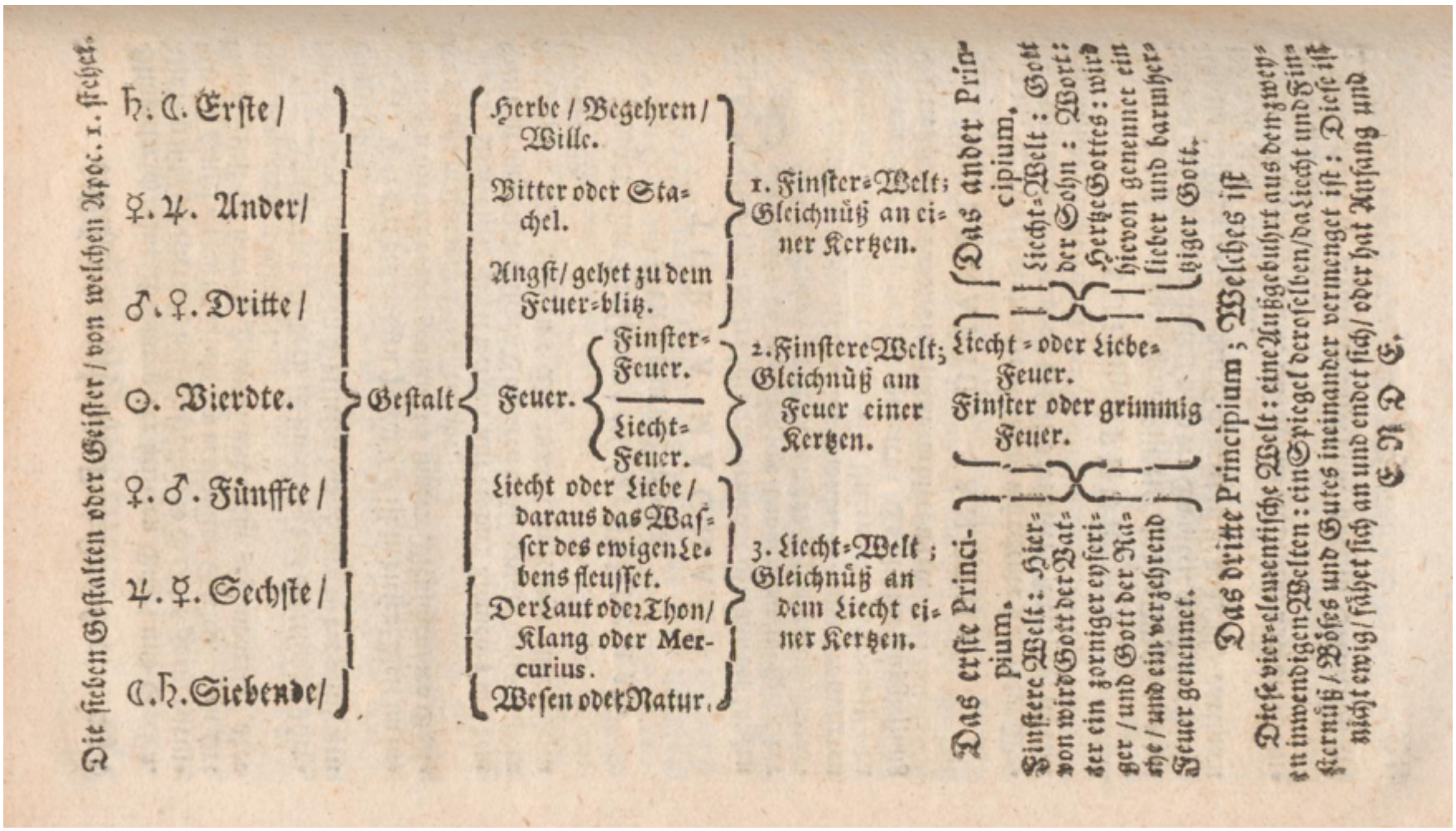
Azoth Sive Aureliae Occultae Philosophorum, 1613 ev. p. 66

In his 1564 (ev) work *Monas Hieroglyphica* John Dee provides another sequence:

volvendo revolvendoque: Ut Scarabei ſuas conglomerant pilas. Ita magna fieret ovi Metamorphoſis: Jam ſcilicet diſparente, & quaſi involuto Albumine ipſo (illis multis veluti Helicis Revolutionibus factis) in ipſo Vitellinoſo liquore. Cujus artificij, tale Hieroglyphicum ſignum, naturæ haud diſplicebit Oeconomis. Sæculis prioribus, multum eſſe à graviſſimis, & antiquiſſimis celebratum Philoſophis, tale artificium, legi-
mus:

Monas Hieroglyphica, 1564 ev

A later work (1682 ev) provides two sequences both with the Sun at the centre:


Die ſieben Geſtalten oder Geiſter / von welchen Apoc. 1. ſchreibet.
☿. ☾. Erſte /
♀. ☿. Ander /
♂. ♀. Dritte /
☉. Vierdte.
♀. ♂. Fünffte /
☿. ♀. Sechſte /
☾. ☿. Siebende /
Geſtalt
Herbe / Begehren / Wille.
Bitter oder Stachel.
Angſt / gehet zu dem Feuer-blitz.
Feuer.
Finſter-Feuer.
Liecht-Feuer.
Liecht oder Liebe / daraus das Waſſer des ewigen Lebens fleuſſet.
Der Laut oder Thon / Klang oder Mercurius.
Weſen oder Natur.
1. Finſter-Welt; Gleichnüß an einer Kertzen.
2. Finſtere Welt; Gleichnüß am Feuer einer Kertzen.
3. Liecht-Welt; Gleichnüß an dem Liecht einer Kertzen.
Das andere Principium.
Liecht-Welt: Gott der Sohn: Wort: Hertz Gottes: wie ein Abglantz ſeiner ſelbſt.
Finſtere Welt: Hierinnen wird Gott der Vater offenbar / und Gott der Mutter / als ein feuriger eyferiſcher Gott.
Das dritte Principium; Welches iſt Feuer genennet.
Das erſte Principium.
Finſter oder grimmig Feuer.
Liecht- oder Liebe-Feuer.
Hier ragt Gott ſicher und warnehmend / wie ein Geiſt / ſchwebend und wircket in allen Dingen.
Dieſe vier-elementiſche Welt: eine Ausgebuhrt aus der ewigen Natur / iſt ein Spiegel der Gottheit / da Gott ſich ſelber ſiehet / und Gefallen an ſeiner Herrlichkeit hat / und ſeine Luſt darinnen hat.
Jakob Böhme, De Signatura Rerum, 1682 ev .p.252

Such association of the seven spheres of the ἄνοδος with the seven classical planets also led to often varying tables of correspondences giving what were assumed or believed to be the attributes or the qualities or the nature of each sphere, with for example the sphere of Saturn attributed in one work to the metal Lead, the alchemical stage of Putrefaction, and the constellation Capricorn:

B. à Portu Aquitanus.

Pigmæi.	Silvani.	Vulcani.	Penates. Superi.	Heroes.	Nymphæ.	Lemures. Manes.
♄ Plumbum.	♃ Stannum.	♂ Ferrum.	☉ Aurum.	♀ Cuprum.	☿ Mercurius.	☾ Argentum.
Mysterium extremæ unctionis.	Mysterium. Ordinis.	Mysterium. Contritionis.	Mysterium. Altaris.	Mysterium. Conjugij.	Mysterium Confirmationis.	Mysterium. Baptismatis.
Sal marinum.	Sal armoniacum.	Salpetræ.	Sal commune.	Vitriolum.	Alumen plumosum.	Alumen.
Splen.	Epar.	Fel.	Cor.	Renes.	Pulmo.	Cerebrum.
Antimonium.	Visмat.	Chobolt.	Sulphur.	Thutia.	Cinabrium.	Talc.
Capricornus.	Libra.	Aries.	Leo.	Taurus.	Virgo.	Cancer.
Noctua.	Columba.	Struthio.	Aquila.	Pavo.	Ciconia.	Cinnus.
Linum.	Hordeum.	Avena.	Triticum.	Pisa.	Milium.	Siligo.
Vrsus.	Ovis.	Equus.	Vnicornu.	Alces.	Panthera.	Tigris.
Bufo.	Aranea.	Scorpio.	Draco.	Lacerta viridis.	Basiliscus.	Serpens.
Decrepitas.	Senectus.	Virilitas plena.	Virilitas prima.	Iuvenilitas.	Pueritia.	Infantia.
Calx metallorum.	Oleum vel resina metallorum.	Sal metallorum.	Tinctura metallorum.	Crocus metallorum.	Mercurius metallorum.	Liquor metallorum.
Putrefactio.	Destillatio.	Calcinatio.	Transmutatio.	Coagulatio.	Sublimatio.	Solutio.
Dij terrestres.	Dij aerei.	Dij ignei.	Dij cælestes.	Dij mortui.	Dij aquei.	Dij infernales.

Hæc tabula inferenda est pagina 109. secundæ partis, ante prologum lib. 12. portarum Georgij Riplei.

Theatrum chemicum, praecipuos selectorum auctorum tractatus
de chemiae et lapidis philosophici antiquitate, Volumen secundum. 1659 ev. p.10

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II. Noesis And The Star Game

One esoteric and important feature of The Hebdomian Way is that the seven stages although in a particular sequence are named only initially and purely for convenience and have no correspondences or any attributes associated with them - mythological, alchemical, astronomical, philosophical, psychological, Occult, or otherwise - save for those personal qualities associated with a particular stage or sphere in the Poemandres tractate. That is, The Hebdomian Way returns to the primary hermetic source since the essence of that Way is changing the individual through pathei-mathos - πάθει μάθος, the personal learning or discovery resulting from practical experiences and challenges - with everything external or internal to this considered as unnecessary, unhelpful, and distractive.

The sequence of The Hebdomian Way is the Ciceronian and ancient one of Moon-Mercury-Venus-Sun-Mars-Jupiter-Saturn although as was often done in medieval and Renaissance times in Europe this particular order could be and often was inverted, as Evola mentions:

Nell'antica tradizione ellenistica, riportata da Stefanio (247), l'ordine è diverso. Le regioni sideree, associate agli dèi e alle metallità sacre a ciascuno di essi, hanno il seguente ordine: Saturno (Piombo, ♄), Giove (Bronzo, ♃), Marte (Ferro, ♂), Sole (Oro, ☉), Venere (Rame, ♀), Mercurio (☿), Luna (Argento, ☾). Questa disposizione però si può ricondurre ad una simmetria rispetto al Sole che sta al centro, con sopra Saturno, Giove e Marte, triade di divinità maschili, e sotto, in simmetria, Venere, Mercurio e Luna triade di divinità feminili (il Mercurio come «Donna dei Filosofi»): come nel grafico riportato a p. 173. L'itinerario spirituale allora sarebbe, per cosí dire, a spirale: partendo da un dio maschio superiore, si discenderebbe per ricongiungersi con la divinità feminile sim-

Evola, op.cit., p.172

In the practical and uncomplicated Hebdomian Way such a reversal has no significance, for what is significant is the pathei-mathos which could 'offer up' the trait of a particular stage howsoever that stage is named or not-named.

Which is why the noetic version of The Star Game (see section III) can be used as an experiencing and understanding

of the Hebdomad and the sevenfold seeking, *sans* denotata, thus betaking the individual beyond the unnecessary need for both a dialectic of opposites and the exegesis of the written word, an exegesis evident for example in the various and varying translations/interpretations of the tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum. Which personal and noetic experiencing and understanding of the Hebdomad and the sevenfold seeking forms a necessary part of the pathei-mathos of the first stage of the Hebdomian Way, with noesis understood as a silent, contemplative, way of knowing and 'thinking' as intimated in the enigmatic tractate XIII of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> i) σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ
>
> noetic sapientia is in silence. (v.2)
>
> ii) νοερῶς ἔγνως σεαυτὸν
>
> Through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself. (v.22)

Of which translation Myatt writes {7} in his commentary:

> **2.** *noetic sapientia*. For a variety of reasons, I have used the term *noetic sapientia* to denote σοφία νοερὰ.
>
> i) The metaphysical terms νοῦς νοερός, νοῦς οὐσιώδης, and νοῦς ζωτικός occur in Proclus, qv. *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentari*, Volume 5, Book 4, 245-247; *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, II 733 and IV 887. Interestingly, Proclus associates νοερός with the three 'septenary planets' Mercury, Venus, and the Sun.
>
> Here, σοφία νοερὰ may well suggest a particular hermetic principle which requires contextual interpretation.
>
> ii) As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 29 - where I used the Latin *sapientia* in respect of σοφία - in some contexts the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context given what the English term 'wisdom' now, in common usage and otherwise, often denotes. As in the Poemandres tractate *sapientia* (for σοφία) requires contextual - a philosophical - interpretation, as Sophia (for σοφία) does in tractate XI where it is there suggestive, as with Aion, Kronos, and Kosmos, of a personified metaphysical principle.
>
> iii) In respect of νοερός, the English word 'intellectual' has too many irrelevant modern connotations, with phrases such as 'intellectual wisdom' and 'the wisdom that understands' - for σοφία νοερὰ - unhelpful regarding suggesting a relevant philosophical meaning. Hence the use of the term 'noetic' which suggests a particular type of apprehension - a perceiveration - whereby certain knowledge and a particular understanding can be ascertained.
>
> Thus, *noetic sapientia* implies that the knowledge and understanding that is noetically acquired transcends - or at least is different from - that acquired both (a) through observation of and deductions concerning phenomena and (b) through the use of <denotata> whereby beings are given 'names' and assigned to abstractive categories with such naming and such categories assumed to provide knowledge and understanding of the physis of those beings. [In respect of physis, qv. the comment on φύσεως μιᾶς in section 12.]
>
> In addition, given what follows - ἐν σιγῇ, 'in silence' - such knowledge and understanding does not require nor depend upon words whether they be spoken or written or thought. Hence, the 'source' of mortals is in, can be known and understood through, the silence of noetic sapientia.

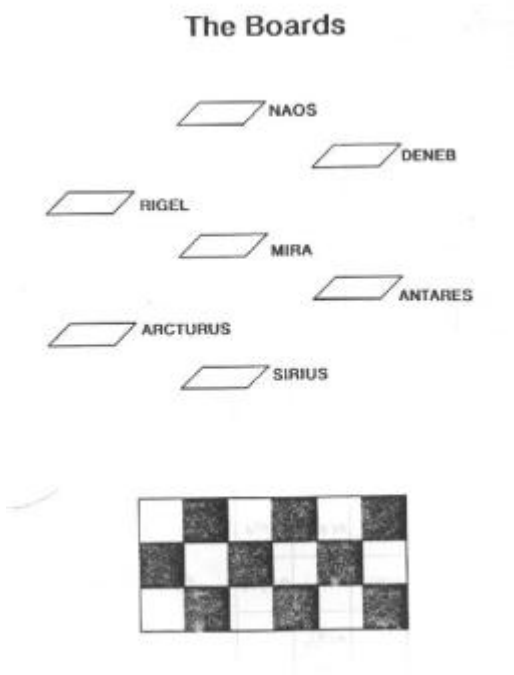
°°°

III. The Noetic Star Game

The noetic Star Game is the use of The Star Game as either (i) a type of silent contemplative meditation by one person who plays one side - the 'white pieces' - against the other side - the 'black pieces' - with an objective determined beforehand, or (ii) against a partner, as in chess, again with an objective determined beforehand.

In both instances the game can be useful in developing an insight into the hebdomad and such matters as the flow and transformation - unfolding, and loss - of beings (symbolised by the pieces) through causality and otherwise; and how symbols as in mathematics and symbolic logic can enable diverse and sometimes new connections to be perceived, sans denotata.

The Star Game itself is a three-dimensional seven-board game developed by David Myatt in 1975 with the seven boards, each board of nine white and nine black squares, placed in a spiral one above the other, representing the hermetic hebdomad, and named after the stars Naos, Deneb, Rigel, Mira, Antares, Arcturus, and Sirius.

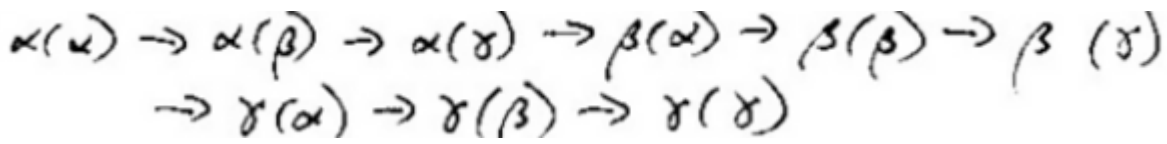


The pieces are designated by symbols and which symbols can be of two types: purely symbolic using a combination of Greek letters or alchemical using alchemical sigils. Each side - or player - as in chess has a set of either white pieces or black pieces, with each player having 27 pieces consisting of three sets of nine combinations. In terms of Greek letters the nine pieces for each player are:

α(α) α(β) α(γ) β(α) β(β) β(γ) γ(α) γ(β) γ(γ)

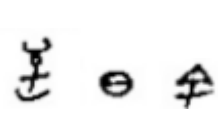
Each piece is thus marked with the appropriate symbol - for example α(α) - with each piece allowed to move across a board, or up or down from board to board, according to its type. Only a γ(γ) type of piece can capture other opposing pieces, and a captured piece is removed from the boards and plays no further part in the game. The basic rule of play is that after a piece has been moved – whether across a board or from one board to a higher or lower board – it is transformed into another piece according to a set sequence and then can be moved according to its new designation. Another rule is that pieces can only stay on the Mira board for three moves: once placed on Mira, the player has three moves before it must be moved to another board. Thus, if a α(α) piece is on Mira it cannot escape since it can only move across the board in which case the piece is forfeited and removed from the game.

The set sequence, for symbolic Greek pieces, is:



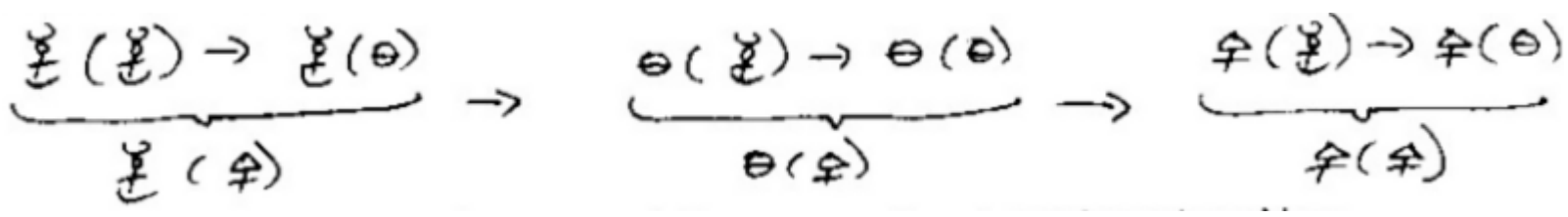
Thus, a α(α) piece when it is moved becomes a α(β) piece; α(β) becomes α(γ) and so on. When a γ(γ) piece is moved it reverts to being a α(α) piece.

In terms of alchemical sigils, the pieces are:



Alchemical Mercury, Alchemical Salt, Alchemical Sulphur

and the sequence is:



It is for each individual to decide which type of symbolism to use, with the alchemical one and the boards of The Star Game illustrated in the following image:

Image 1
The Star Game

The image shows how the pieces are often constructed: as cubes (of wood or other material) with the sides painted with symbols in sequence. Thus, on the six faces of one cube its faces/sides would be marked α(α) α(β) α(γ) β(α) β(β) β(γ). In use, the symbol on the top of the cube – for example α(α) – is the 'active' symbol, and designates the type of piece. When this α(α) piece is moved, it becomes α(β) with the cube turned so that the α(β) symbol is at the top. On its next move, this α(β) piece would be transformed into α(γ) and the cube turned again so that the α(γ) symbol was at the top. This method of marking pieces also means that each player has to make extra (spare) pieces.

At the start of the game, each player has six particular pieces on Sirius, three pieces on Arcturus, six pieces on Antares, three on Rigel, six on Deneb, three on Naos, and none on Mira. As in other board games, the players take turns to make their moves.

The Moves

After a piece has been moved and changed to the one next in sequence it moves according to the type of piece it has become. Thus, α(γ) becomes β(α) and moves according to the rules for a β piece.

° The α pieces - α(α) α(β) α(γ) - can move only across the board they are on to any vacant square.

° The β pieces - β(α) β(β) β(γ) - can move across the board they are already on to any vacant square, and up, or down, one level - for example, from Arcturus up to Antares, or down to Sirius.

° The γ pieces can move to any (vacant) square on any board and a γ(γ) piece can capture any opposing piece on any square on any board, with the captured piece removed from the board and playing no further part. Once moved the γ(γ) becomes α(α) and as an α piece can only move across the board it has landed on.

The player or players decide before the start whether or not to allow a rule variation that increases the difficulty of the game: that pieces on Naos cannot be captured by a γ(γ) piece.

Initial Placement

The initial placings are as follows:

° Six pieces are placed on Sirius - two sets of alpha pieces - for white, and six for black as in Figure 1.

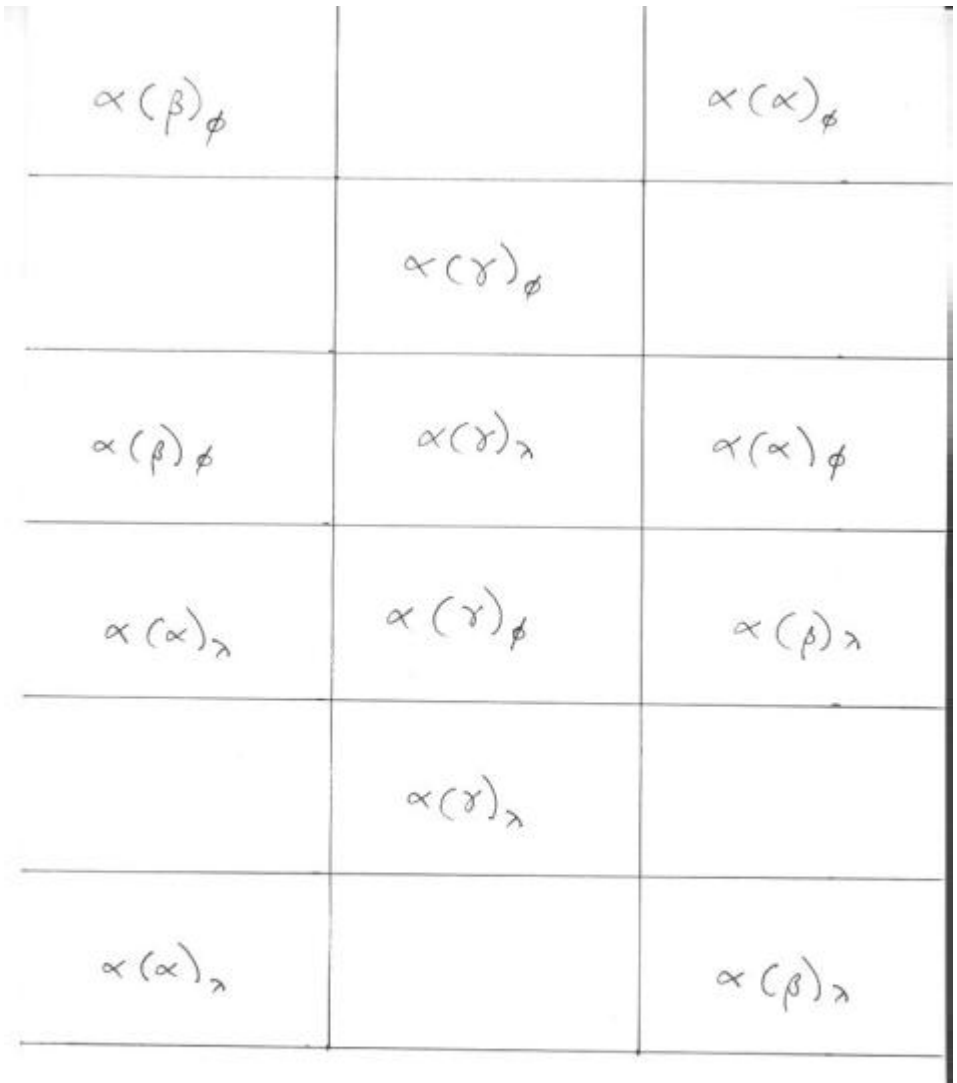


Figure 1

φ = black pieces
λ = white pieces

Sirius

°°°

° Arcturus has three pieces for white and three for black, as in Figure 2:

$\alpha(\beta)_\emptyset$		$\alpha(\alpha)_\emptyset$
	$\alpha(\gamma)_\emptyset$	
	$\alpha(\gamma)_\lambda$	
$\alpha(\alpha)_\lambda$		$\alpha(\beta)_\lambda$

Figure 2

Arcturus

°°°

° Antares has six pieces for white and six for black - two sets of beta pieces, placed exactly as the pieces on the Sirius board.

° Mira has no pieces on it at the start.

° Rigel has the three remaining pieces (for each player) of the beta sets, placed as the alpha pieces on Arcturus.

° Deneb has six pieces of white and six of black from the gamma set, placed as the alpha set on Sirius.

° Naos has the three remaining pieces of the gamma set, placed the same as the alpha sets of Arcturus.

The Objective

The objective is flexible and decided by the player or players before the game. The standard objective is to place three particular pieces on certain squares on Mira, with the type of these pieces and their placing on that board decided beforehand. One such placement is,

$\alpha(\beta)_\lambda$		$\alpha(\alpha)_\lambda$
	$\alpha(\gamma)_\lambda$	
	$\alpha(\gamma)_\phi$	
$\alpha(\alpha)_\phi$		$\alpha(\beta)_\phi$

Figure 3

where the sub-script λ indicates the winning position for the player of the white pieces, with the three other pieces the winning position for the player of the black pieces. The first to so place such pieces, wins the game.

The player or players can also decide beforehand to waive the rule that allows pieces to only stay on the Mira board for three moves.

°°°

IV. The Seven Stages

The Overcoming

° 1. That vigour - enthusiasm - which grows and which fades.
° 2. Those dishonourable machinations.
° 3. That eagerness which deceives.
° 4. The arrogance of authority over others.
° 5. Profane insolence and reckless haste.
° 6. The bad inclinations occasioned by a comfortable life-style.
° 7. The lies that lie in wait.

Thus, and as an example, the second stage is the 'offering up' - the overcoming - of "dishonourable machinations" with the pathei-mathos involved a series of physical challenges, detailed below, which for many would be quite challenging with those who, before beginning their seeking have achieved such challenges setting themselves greater challenges and achieving them, such as instead of the suggested, for a man, training for and running a Marathon in four and a half hours, running one in four hours or much less.

How does or how can the overcoming by the Hebdomadary - the seeker - of such physical challenges distance a person from dishonourable machinations? Because practical experience over decades by a variety of persons has revealed that the training can and should take months, is physically and mentally demanding and time-consuming, and distances one metaphorically and often physically from a world where "dishonourable machinations" may be and possibly have been personally advantageous to the seeker and probably known to have been used by others either against the seeker or otherwise.

The Tasks

1.

Obtain copies of and read tractates I, III, IV, and XIII of The Corpus Hermeticum. The book containing the tractates should have a scholarly commentary and if a translation is required at least two different versions should be obtained, read and compared. {8} Afterwards, write an essay concerning your understanding of Hellenic Hermeticism. If an individual unversed in the classics has a desire to do so they can learn Hellenistic Greek and undertake their own translations. In understanding hermeticism the individual may find the study and use of the noetic Star Game helpful.

2.

For men, (a) walking thirty-two miles, in rural terrain, in less than seven hours while carrying a rucksack weighing at least 30 pounds; (b) running 26 miles and 385 yards (a Marathon) in four and a half hours; (c) cycling two hundred or more miles in twelve hours.

For women, (a) walking twenty-seven miles in under seven hours while carrying a rucksack weighing at least 15 pounds; (b) running 26 miles and 385 yards (a Marathon) in five hours; (c) cycling one hundred and seventy miles in twelve hours.

Those who, before beginning their quest have already reached such standards should set themselves greater physical challenges and achieve them.

3.

With an existing partner, or after finding a suitable partner willing to undertake the task with you, find a hill or mountain in an isolated area - or a desert area miles from any human habitation - which affords an unobstructed night-time view of the stars and wild-camp there for at least three days and nights.

4.

A living alone in an wilderness area, near water suitable for drinking, for a three month period taking with you all that is required in a rucksack which you carry on your own back. You can either (i) build your own shelter from local materials and find your own food by hunting, fishing, and gathering, or (ii) take a tent and sleeping bag and on a monthly basis purchase and take back to your site such food supplies as may be needed from a locality situated at a suitable walking distance, with around 10 miles being suggested.

During the task you should maintain your isolation and have no means of communication with the outside world, use only candles (in a lantern) for illumination, have no means of measuring the passing of time (such as a watch) and no means of reproducing music or any other form of entertainment.

The Hebdomadary should keep a handwritten journal to record their musings.

5.

Write a full length novel of whatever genre, two of whose characters should be based on or inspired by either contemporary or historical persons you find interesting or inspiring or have an empathy for or a dislike of. The novel can also be based on your own life and/or experience and involve a locality and/or persons you know.

You should undertake the necessary contemporary or historical research in terms of plausible characters, scenarios, dialogue and locations, and if necessary read several published contemporary or historical novels to ascertain for yourself how various novelists structure their story, describe characters and events, and employ dialogue.

6.

The task begins at a full moon in Autumn and lasts seven days and nights and is to stay alone for that period in an isolated underground cavern where or near to where drinkable water flows, taking all that is required for the duration of the rite, including water if there is no drinkable water available, and food consisting of bread and cheese and, if you so desire, a supply of wine or beer. If a such an underground cavern cannot be found, then a suitable alternative is an isolated dark cave with, if necessary, its entrance suitably screened to avoid an ingress of light.

The only light is from candles (housed in a lantern) and no means of communication with the outside world, no timepiece, mechanical or otherwise, and no modern means of reproducing music nor any other means of personal entertainment should be brought.

The Hebdomadary should arrange for a trusted person or their partner or a family member to end their isolation after seven days.

7.

The task involves the Hebdomadary - alone or with their partner - walking, in isolated terrain, a distance of at least 210 miles in 21 days carrying appropriate equipment for camping and supplies of food and water to last several days with their route enabling them to find suitable sources of drinking water when necessary. Supplies of food, if dehydrated or freeze-dried, should last as long as practicable, and then when necessary and possible food can be bought en route. The journey is to end at or near a site which the Hebdomadary finds they have an empathy with or if accompanied by their partner that they both have an empathy with. The Hebdomadary and/or their partner should keep a handwritten diary of their journey.

°°°

Footnotes

{1} Being itself has been variously understood, through for example traditional metaphysics, through the ontology of Martin Heidegger, and as the numinous/The Numen in Myatt's philosophy of pathei-mathos.

{2} As noted in our essay *Julius Evola, The Seven Fold Way, And The Corpus Hermeticum*,

> An axiom of Greco-Roman (Hellenic) hermeticism is that the κόσμος is a reasoned order and has an ordered structure which human beings, by virtue of possessing the faculty of reason, are - in their natural state of physis (φύσις) or fitrah - an eikon (εἰκὼν) of since as stated in a Latin version (Liber Hermetis de alchimia) of a commentary on the Arabic alchemical text al-Lawh al-Zumurrud, The Emerald Table, *quod est inferius est sicut quod est superius*, 'what is above is as what is below'.
>
> Which is why tractate II of the Corpus Hermeticum states that there is a "cosmic order on Earth: A cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings," τὴν γῆν κοσμῆσαι κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον.
>
> Hence also why the twenty-sixth chapter of the book *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* by Marsilii Ficini (published in 1489 ev) has as its heading: *Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona*, 'How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presenced therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned.'
>
> Source: https://archive.org/download/evola-7fw-v3/evola-7fw-v3.pdf

{3} *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, 2017. ISBN 978-1976452369

{4} As described in *Julius Evola, The Seven Fold Way, And The Corpus Hermeticum* (op.cit) and elsewhere:

> As a term Lapis Philosophicus means the "jewel of the alchemist", since the term Philosophicus means an alchemist and not, as is commonly said, a philosopher, just as lapis (qv. λίθος τῶν σοφῶν) when used in Latin alchemical texts means "jewel" and not "stone".
>
> For Hermetic tradition relates that λίθος as a jewel, or precious stone, was attested by Herodotus, who in *The Histories*, Book II, 44, wrote, in reference to "the sacred Temple of Heracles", ἡ δὲ σμαράγδου λίθου λάμποντος τὰς νύκτας μέγαθος.
>
> It was possibly used in the same way by Aristotle who wrote, in reference to the Nine Archons,
>
> > ἀναγράψαντες δὲ τοὺς νόμους εἰς τοὺς κύρβεις ἔστησαν ἐν τῇ στοᾷ τῇ βασιλείῳ καὶ ὤμοσαν χρήσεσθαι πάντες. οἱ δ᾽ ἐννέα ἄρχοντες ὀμνύντες πρὸς τῷ λίθῳ κατεφάτιζον ἀναθήσειν ἀνδριάντα χρυσοῦν, ἐάν τινα παραβῶσι τῶν νόμων: ὅθεν ἔτι καὶ νῦν οὕτως ὀμνύουσι. Athenian Constitution, 7.1
>
> Also, as noted in *English–Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language* by S. C. Woodhouse, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1910, the term λίθος describes a jewel, as in Plato:
>
> ὧν καὶ τὰ ἐνθάδε λιθίδια εἶναι ταῦτα τὰ ἀγαπώμενα μόρια, σάρδιά τε καὶ ἰάσπιδας καὶ σμαράγδους καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα: ἐκεῖ δὲ οὐδὲν ὅτι οὐ τοιοῦτον εἶναι καὶ ἔτι τούτων καλλίω. Phaedo 110 δ-ε

{5} *La Tradizione Ermetica*, Second Edition, Edizioni Mediterranee, 1996. ISBN 978-8827211595. p.172

English translation of Italian edition: *The Hermetic Tradition - Symbols and Teachings of the Royal Art.* 1995. ISBN 978-0892814510.

{6} Ex quibus summum globum possidet illa, quam in terris Saturniam nominant. Deinde est hominum generi prosperus et salutaris ille fulgor, qui dicitur Iovis; tum rutilus horribilisque terris, quem Martium dicitis; deinde subter mediam fere regionem Sol obtinet, dux et princeps et moderator luminum reliquorum, mens mundi et temperatio, tanta magnitudine, ut cuncta sua luce lustret et compleat. Hunc ut comites consequuntur Veneris alter, alter Mercurii

cursus, in infimoque orbe Luna radiis solis accensa convertitur. Infra autem iam nihil est nisi mortale et caducum praeter animos munere deorum hominum generi datos; supra Lunam sunt aeterna omnia.

{7} Commentary on tractate XIII. *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, op.cit. In the cited quotation we have, with his permission, replaced Myatt's term 'denotatum' with the plural 'denotata' - enclosed within angular brackets - to avoid confusion, since Myatt idiosyncratically uses the singular 'denotatum' as an Anglicized term for both singular and plural instances.

{8} Recommended translations with commentaries: (i) Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 1995, Cambridge University Press, ISBN 978-0521425438 (ii) Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum, Eight Tractates,* 2017, ISBN 978-1976452369

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The Star Game And The Hebdomad

Image 1: The Original Star Game

Preface

This essay will concentrate on the original 1975 Star Game, its hermetic origins and its significance as a challenging and alchemical game, and not on the later embellished so-called "advanced" version as used by the Order of Nine Angles (O9A) where the nine permutations of the three fundamental alchemical substances are regarded as the "Nine Angles" of O9A esotericism and where The Star Game with its multiple additional boards and pieces is used as a form of sorcery. {1}

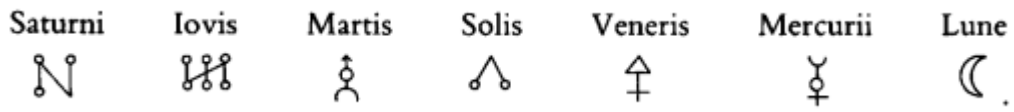
In our view that embellished version detracts from the metaphysical beauty of the original.

Introduction

The Star Game (TSG) is a three-dimensional seven-board game developed by David Myatt in 1975 and inspired by his reading of such works as Carl Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. {2} The seven boards represent the ancient hermetic septenary system, the hebdomad, as described in the Pymander tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum (c.200 ev) and also described in the later Arabic manuscript titled Ghayat al-hakim (c.1050 ev) where the hebdomad is associated

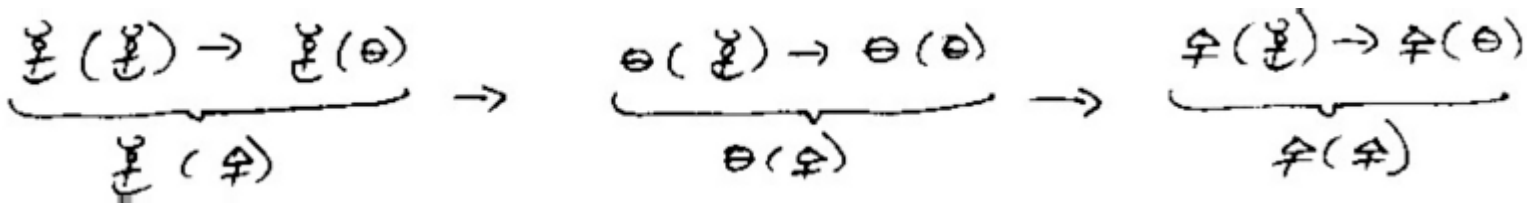
with the seven classical planets - Moon, Mercury. Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn - each of which is represented by a sigil as in the later Latin translations of Ghayat al-hakim circulated under the title Picatrix between c.1300 and c.1459 ev:

Ghayat al-hakim Planetary Sigils



Picatrix Planetary Sigils

The pieces of the Star Game are represented by the nine combinations of the three fundamental alchemical substances or elements - alchemical mercury, alchemical salt, alchemical sulphur - in the form of their sigils:



where is alchemical mercury, is alchemical salt, and is alchemical sulphur. These three fundamental alchemical substances and the hebdomad were illustrated in the alchemical text *Azoth Sive Aureliae Occultae Philosophorum*, published in 1613:

In other alchemical texts the combination of alchemical mercury, alchemical salt, and alchemical sulphur were said to produce Azoth, "the living water" also known as "the liquid of life", as illustrated in colour in the manuscript *Rosarium Philosophorum* (c. 1700s) where they represent spiritus, anima, and corpus:

Boards, Pieces, and Gameplay

There are two forms of The Star Game: the original one and the 'advanced' one. The original one, developed in the 1970s, has - as in Illustration 1 - seven boards each of which has nine black and nine white squares, and 27 pieces per side or player, one set black with the other white.

The boards themselves are set in a spiral one above the other and are named after the stars Naos, Deneb, Rigel, Mira, Antares, Arcturus, and Sirius, with Naos being the first board and Sirius the seventh.

In the original version each player has three sets of nine consisting of the following pieces:

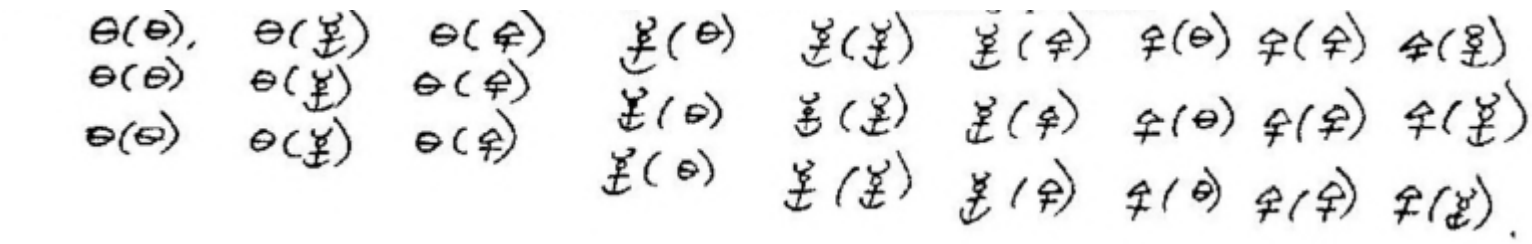
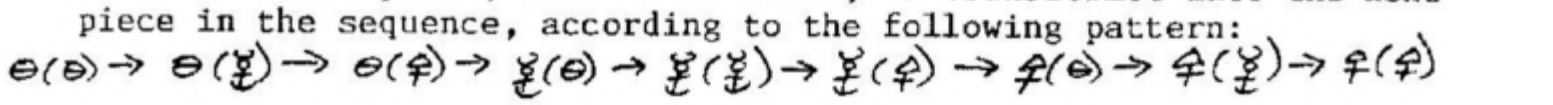
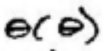


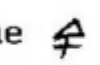
Image 2

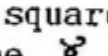
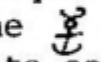
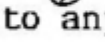
The pieces are usually small cubes with each side marked with one of nine alchemical combinations. The movement rules of the game are that:

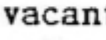
Each piece, when it is moved, is transformed into the next piece in the sequence, according to the following pattern:



Thus, a when it is moved, becomes a  piece; a piece becomes a piece, and so on. When a piece is moved, it becomes a piece, and the sequence begins again.

The  pieces (that is,) can move from any board to any other board, to any vacant square, as well as to any vacant square on the board they are already on.

The  pieces ( ) can move across the board they are on to any vacant square, or up or down two boards. For example, a  piece on Sirius can move to either Arcturus or Antares; while a  piece on, say, Rigel could move to Deneb, or Naos, or Mira or Antares, to any vacant square on these boards.

The  pieces (that is,) can move only across a board one square at a time to a square of the same colour, or up or down one board to a square of the same colour. Thus, for example, a piece on a black square on Arcturus could move to a vacant black square on either Sirius or Antares - or move across the Arcturus board to a square of the same colour.

After any piece has been moved according to the rules above and placed on a new square, it is changed for the piece next in the sequence above, and when next moves, moves according to the rules for the new piece.

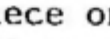
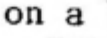
A piece on any square on Naos may capture any piece of the opposite colour on any square or any board, except Naos. The piece so captured is removed from the board and plays no further part. After such a capture, the  piece becomes a  piece.

Image 3

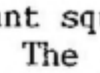
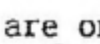
Thus, when a piece is moved and transformed the cube is turned so that the active symbol is at the top.

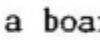
In terms of placement of the pieces at the start of the game, six pieces for each player are placed on Sirius in the same pattern as shown in Image 1 above for Deneb. Arcturus has three pieces for each player, place as on Image 1. Antares has six pieces per player as in Image 1, with the first three pieces being as the first three on Deneb. Mira has no pieces.

Rigel has the remaining three pieces of the set placed as the set on Sirius. Naos has three pieces per player arranged as in Image 1.

In addition, each piece has a certain 'degree of freedom' according to its type:

The pieces (that is,) can move from any board to any other board, to any vacant square, as well as to any vacant square on the board they are already on.

The pieces () can move across the board they are on to any vacant square, or up or down two boards. For example, a  piece on Sirius can move to either Arcturus or Antares; while a piece on, say, Rigel could move to Deneb, or Naos, or Mira or Antares, to any vacant square on these boards.

The pieces (that is,) can move only across a board one square at a time to a square of the same colour, or up or down one board to a square of the same colour. Thus, for example, a  piece on a black square on Arcturus could move to a vacant black square on either Sirius or Antares - or move across the Arcturus board to a square of the same colour.

After any piece has been moved according to the rules above and placed on a new square, it is changed for the piece next in the sequence above, and when next moves, moves according to the rules for the new piece.

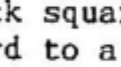
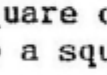
A piece on any square on Naos may capture any piece of the opposite colour on any square or any board, except Naos. The piece so captured is removed from the board and plays no further part. After such a capture, the  piece becomes a  piece.

Image 4

The pieces are usually small cubes with each side marked with one of nine alchemical combinations so that when the

piece is moved and transformed the cube is turned so that the active symbol is at the top.

The original objective of the game was for a player to place three of their pieces on certain squares on Mira, with the type of these pieces and their placing on that board decided by both players beforehand. The first player to do this wins the game.

However, in actual use the players can decide to change the initial, starting, placement of the pieces on the boards as well as the objective.

Alchemical, Archetypal, And Personal Symbolism

While The Star Game (TSG) in its original form can be and has for decades been played by the cognoscenti as a strategic and tactical game akin to conventional chess, it can also be played by two persons as both an alchemical and a personal, psychological, game with the pieces for instance representing (i) the individual psyche, or archetypes (and their associated mythos/mythoi) or (ii) an individual or a partnership alchemical quest, an anados (ἄνοδος) for Lapis Philosophicus. {3}

Thus in the psychological sense the pieces were related by Myatt to Jungian personality types:

and the emergence of new elements. The three basic symbols of the Star Game - ☉ , and ☿ and ♄ - represent the basic elements from which the psychic energies are formed, when manifest on the individual level. Thus, the nine combinations of these three elements, as the pieces of the Star Game, represent the combination of the energies possible.

However, for a complete description of the individual pysche, these nine combinations are extended over the seven boards on a three-fold basis because the seven boards (re-presenting the seven spheres of the septenary) symbolize the possible orientations of consciousness: in simple terms, the seven spheres and the correspondences associated with them (particuarly the god-forms or archetypes) are present, either latently or expressed, within each individual.

To make this clear, Jung's terminology will be used, although it should be remembered that even this is only one expression of many: the most representative expression being the abstract symbols themselves since these are devoid of the conflict of 'opposites' and the dogmatic/ religious undertones that underlie many of the traditional expressions.

In this terminology, the seven spheres represent the seven fundamental archtypes within our psyche, according to the table given below where the archetypes are expressed in terms of both Greek and Norse mythology: for example, Mercury is the 'trickster' - Loki in Norse, Hermes in Greek. As with all such representations, these are only a guide, an outward expression of inner essence.

☉(☉) Extravert Feeling type

☉(☿) " Intuitive

☉(♄) " Thinking

☿(☉) Intravert Feeling ;

☿(☿) " Intuitive;

☿(♄) " Thinking;

Thus (☉) may be said to represent 'Feeling'; (☿) 'Intuition' and (♄) 'Thinking' as these terms are defined by Jung.

Further, ☉ ( ) describes 'ego' consciousness; ☿ ( ) 'self' consciousness, and ♄ ( ) the consciousness beyond the 'self' -

Image 5

Which Myattian interpretation, in terms of personality, is only one of many possible interpretations as he himself acknowledged.

In historical alchemical and hermetic terms, the nine combinations are the possible permutations and interactions of the elemental forces designated spiritus, anima, and corpus, both in the individual, in their partner (if they have one) and in 'society' past and present. Hence the movement of pieces would represent not only the quest for Jungian 'individuation' and the wisdom - Azoth, the liquid of life - that lies beyond such individuation but also the difficulties and obstacles, the opposition, as manifest by the opposing player, that may be encountered.

In terms of the quest for Lapis Philosophicus, the seven boards (the seven stages of the quest) are referenced to the personal traits described in the Pymander tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum:

καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾷ λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τετάρτῃ τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῇ πέμπτῃ τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῇ ἕκτῃ τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ ζώνῃ τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.

"Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait." {4}

That is:

° that vigour - enthusiasm - which grows and which fades
° those dishonourable machinations
° that eagerness which deceives
° the arrogance of authority over others
° profane insolence and reckless haste
° the bad inclinations occasioned by a comfortable life-style

and thence to what we have termed The Hebdomian Way with its seven practical stages {5} by means of which Lapis Philosophicus may be attained, with the opponent again representing the known, the posited, and the unexpected difficulties and obstacles that may be encountered both internally, within one's self, and externally.

In addition, the player or players of The Star Game can develop their own interpretation of its 'meaning and purpose' be such archetypal, mythological, personal, or otherwise. Which makes The Star Game intriguing, versatile, challenging, and enigmatic.

Conclusion

Shorn of its subsequent and in our view unnecessary association with twentieth century sorcery, the original septenary Star Game has much to commend it both in hermetic terms - as a new symbolic and cerebral exposition of hermetic philosophy - and in terms of a practical and interesting board game suitable for the twenty-first century.

Seven Oxonians
January 2022 ev

{1} Details of both versions of The Star Game - the original and the 'advanced' - were first published in 1989 in the typewritten 125 page text *Naos - A Practical Guide to Modern Magick* of which 63 facsimile spiral-bound copies were originally distributed. Prior to this, the manuscripts describing The Star Game had been in private circulation for many years.

Further copies of the facsimile of *Naos*, with the addition of new card covers, were distributed from the 1990s onwards, one of which was the source of the digital (pdf) version which was widely circulated and is currently available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20210515224216/https://omega9alpha.files.wordpress.com/2021/04/naos-practical-guide-to-modern-magick.pdf

In 1990 a limited printed now rare edition in a ring binder was published by Coxland Press, a copy of which is in the British Library at General Reference Collection YK.1993.a.13307

The development of the 'advanced' form of The Star Game and the association of TSG with twentieth century sorcery/magick occurred in the mid-1980s, with the term magick, as employed in the subtitle of the *Naos* text, as a synonym for sorcery dating from the European Renaissance and used in books such as the collection of alchemical texts edited by Elias Ashmole published under the title *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* in 1652 ev.

{2} David Myatt, *The Star Game: History and Theory*, e-text, 2008, https://lapisphilosophicus.wordpress.com/star-game-history-and-theory/

{3} Finding Lapis Philosophicus is the aim of hermetic, alchemical, and several other esoteric traditions ancient and modern, with the term used to describe Wisdom understood as: (i) "a balanced personal judgement; having discernment" and (ii) having certain knowledge of a pagan, esoteric, kind to do with living beings, human nature, and (iii) having an understanding of ourselves, of our relation to the world, to Nature, and to the Cosmos beyond.

The term Lapis Philosophicus - post-classical Latin, c. 13th century; qv. Byzantine Greek: λίθος τῶν σοφῶν - pre-dates the term lapis philosophorum and was used by early writers on alchemy such as Raymund Lully, and by the Elizabethan Oxford classical scholar John Case in a book entitled *Lapis Philosophicus, Sive Commentarius In Octo Libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, published in 1600 CE. The term was also used by Isaac Newton in a handwritten manuscript

entitled *Lapis Philosophicus cum suis rotis elementaribus* [MS 416, in Babson College's Grace K. Babson Collection of the Works of Sir Isaac Newton, currently housed in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California].

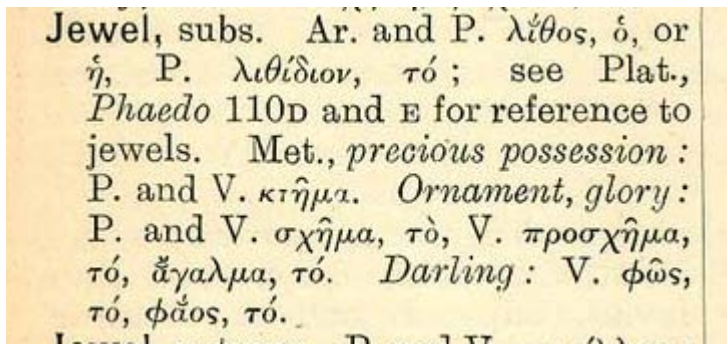
Lapis Philosophicus means the "jewel of the alchemist", since the term Philosophicus means an alchemist not, as is commonly said, a philosopher, just as lapis (qv. λίθος τῶν σοφῶν) when used in Latin alchemical texts means "jewel" and not "stone".

For esoteric hermetic tradition relates that λίθος as a jewel, or precious stone, was attested by Herodotus, who in The Histories, Book II, 44, wrote, in reference to "the sacred Temple of Heracles", ἡ δὲ σμαράγδου λίθου λάμποντος τὰς νύκτας μέγαθος.

It was possibly used in the same way by Aristotle who wrote, in reference to the Nine Archons,

> ἀναγράψαντες δὲ τοὺς νόμους εἰς τοὺς κύρβεις ἔστησαν ἐν τῇ στοᾷ τῇ βασιλείῳ καὶ ὤμοσαν χρήσεσθαι πάντες. οἱ δ᾽ ἐννέα ἄρχοντες ὀμνύντες πρὸς τῷ λίθῳ κατεφάτιζον ἀναθήσειν ἀνδριάντα χρυσοῦν, ἐάν τινα παραβῶσι τῶν νόμων: ὅθεν ἔτι καὶ νῦν οὕτως ὀμνύουσι. Athenian Constitution, 7.1

Also, as noted in *English–Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language* by S. C. Woodhouse, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1910,


Jewel, subs. Ar. and P. λίθος, ὁ, or ἡ, P. λιθίδιον, τό; see Plat., *Phaedo* 110D and E for reference to jewels. Met., *precious possession*: P. and V. κτῆμα. *Ornament, glory*: P. and V. σχῆμα, τὸ, V. προσχῆμα, τό, ἄγαλμα, τό. *Darling*: V. φῶς, τό, φάος, τό.

Plato, Phaedo 110δ-ε: ὧν καὶ τὰ ἐνθάδε λιθίδια εἶναι ταῦτα τὰ ἀγαπώμενα μόρια, σάρδιά τε καὶ ἰάσπιδας καὶ σμαράγδους καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα: ἐκεῖ δὲ οὐδὲν ὅτι οὐ τοιοῦτον εἶναι καὶ ἔτι τούτων καλλίω.

{4} Translation by David Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum, Eight Tractates*, 2017, ISBN 978-1976452369. Gratis open access file: https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf [Accessed November 2021]

{5} *The Hebdomian Way*, https://sevenoxonians.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/hebdomian-way-rs.pdf

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Image 1 is in the Public Domain.
Images 2, 3, 4 and 5 are from the 1989 facsimile of *Naos - A Practical Guide to Modern Magick* which is in the Public Domain.

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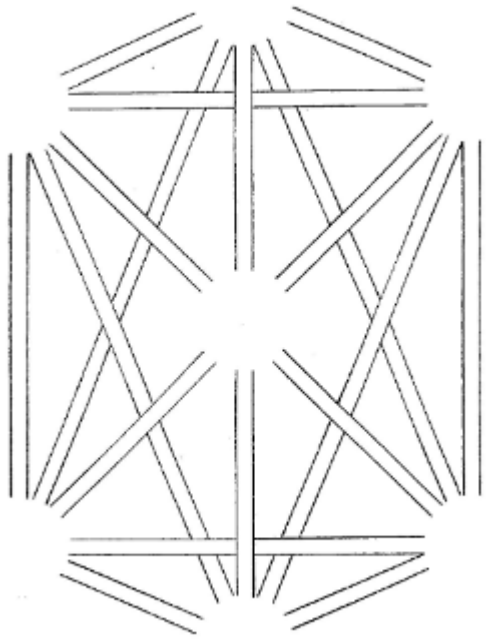

Enantiodromia and The Tree Of Wyrd

Reproduced here is a chapter from Myatt's *The Numinous Way Of Pathei-Mathos* [1] whose title is self-explanatory: Enantiodromia and The Reformation of The Individual. It is relevant to our Hebdomian Way [2] because it is an enantiodromia, a discovery of one's wyrd and thus a changing, an evolution, of the individual. In both the Hebdomian Way the term wyrd is cognate with the Saxon *werthan*, from the Old Frisian *wertha* which became the Old English wythan/wuthan, and the Icelandic *verða*. The meaning is 'to become', to develop; or in the esoteric sense 'to evolve'. Hence why the septenary system, as illustrated above, is termed the Tree Of Wyrd. Thus the esoteric (Batin) meaning and usage of the term wyrd is 'to evolve', to change, as opposed to the exoteric (Zahir) usage or meaning of 'to be destined', Fate, and so on.

It should be noted that Myatt uses the terms masculous and muliebral as descriptors and not as causal abstractions. In Appendix VII of his *The Numinous Way Of Pathei-Mathos* he defines a descriptor as

> "a word, a term, used to describe some-thing which exists and which is personally observed, or is discovered, by means of our senses (including the faculty of empathy). A descriptor differs from an ideation, category, or abstraction, in that a descriptor describes what-is as 'it' is observed, according to its physis (its nature) whereas an abstraction, for example, denotes what is presumed/assumed/idealized, past or present or future. A descriptor relies on, is derived from, describes, individual knowing and individual judgement; an abstraction relies on something abstract, impersonal, such as some opinion/knowing/judgement of others or some assumptions, theory, or hypothesis made by others. An example of a descriptor is the term 'violent' [using physical force sufficient to cause bodily harm or injury to a person or persons] to describe the observed behaviour of an individual."

He defines masculous and muliebral as:

> Masculous is a term, a descriptor, used to refer to certain traits, abilities, and qualities that are conventionally and historically associated with men, such as competitiveness, aggression, a certain harshness, the desire to organize/control, and a desire for adventure and/or for conflict/war/violence /competition over and above personal love and culture. Extremist ideologies manifest an unbalanced, an excessive, masculous nature.
>
> The term muliebral derives from the classical Latin word muliebris, and in the context the philosophy of Pathei-Mathos refers to those positive traits, abilities, and qualities that are conventionally and historically associated with women, such as empathy, sensitivity, gentleness, compassion, and a desire to love and be loved over and above a desire for conflict/adventure/war.

[1] https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf
[2] https://sevenoxonians.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/noetic-hebdomad-v5.pdf

Enantiodromia and The Reformation of The Individual

The Muliebral and the Masculous

The third axiom of The Way of Pathei-Mathos is:

> That because of or following πάθει μάθος there is or there can be a change in, a development of, the nature, the character - the φύσις - of the person because of that revealing and that appreciation (or re-appreciation) of the numinous whose genesis is this πάθει μάθος, and which appreciation of the numinous includes an awareness of why ὕβρις is an error (often the error) of unbalance, of disrespect or ignorance (of the numinous), of a going beyond the due limits, and which ὕβρις itself is the genesis both of the τύραννος and of the modern error of extremism. For the tyrannos and the modern extremist (and their extremisms) embody and give rise to and perpetuate ἔρις and thus are a cause of, or contribute to and aid, suffering.

This change, this development of the individual, is or can be the result of a process termed enantiodromia, which is the process of perceiving, feeling, knowing, beyond causal appearance and the separation-of-otherness and thus when what has become separated - or has been incorrectly perceived as separated - returns to the wholeness, the unity, from whence it came forth. When beings are understood in their correct relation to Being, beyond the causal abstraction of different/conflicting ideated opposites, a relation manifest in the cosmic perspective and thus a knowing of ourselves as but one fallible, microcosmic, fragile, mortal, biological nexion connected to and not separate from all other Life.

An important and a necessary part of enantiodromia involves a discovery, a knowing, an acceptance, and - as prelude - an interior balancing within themselves, of what has hitherto been perceived and designated as the apparent opposites described by terms such as 'muliebral' and 'masculous'. A perception of opposites manifested in ideations such as those concerning assumed traits of character, and assumed or 'ideal' rôles, behaviour, and occupations, assigned to each person, and especially historically in the prejudice of how the rôle - the duty - of men is or should be to lead, to control, to govern, to possess authority, to dominate, to be master.

The discovery of enantiodromia is of how such a designated and perceived dichotomy is but illusive, unnecessary, unhealthy, appearance, and does not therefore express either the natural, the real, nature (φύσις) of our personal character, our being, or the real nature, the Φύσις, of Being itself. In essence, this is the discovery, mentioned by Heraclitus [1], concerning Πόλεμος and γινόμενα πάντα κατ΄ ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα; that all beings are naturally born - become perceived as separate beings - because of ἔρις, and their genesis (their 'father') is Πόλεμος.

Thus the strife, the discord, often engendered by an external and by the internal (within the individual) clash between such apparent opposites as the 'muliebral' and 'masculous' is one that has naturally arisen due to misperception, due to the separation-of-otherness, as a result of a purely causal, egoist, apprehension of ourselves and of others; an error of perception that, as previously mentioned, empathy and πάθει μάθος can correct, and which correction reveals the truth of ψυχή and a knowing of the cosmic perspective.

One practical consequence of this misapprehension, this error of ὕβρις, concerning 'muliebral' and 'masculous' has been the distaste - even the hatred - of certain ideologies and religions and individuals for those whose personal love is for someone of the same gender. Another practical consequence is and has been the error of extremism, where what is masculous is emphasized to the detriment (internal, and external) of what is muliebral, and where, for example, as in many harsh ideologies, men and women are expected, encouraged - often forced, as for example in fascism - to assume some rôle based on or deriving from some manufactured abstraction, some ideation, concerning what is assumed to be or has been posited as 'the ideal man' or the 'ideal woman' in some idealized society or in some idealized 'nation'.

Furthermore, given that these attributes of personal character that have been termed 'muliebral' and 'masculous' are founded on an illusive apprehension of beings and Being - and on ideations (such as rôles, occupations, and so on) posited as a result of this misapprehension - they not symbolic, or mythological, or unconscious, or even archetypal in the sense of anima and animus.

A Natural Reformation

The balance attained by - which is - enantiodromia is that of simply feeling, accepting, discovering, the empathic, the human, the personal, scale of things and thus understanding our own fallibility-of-knowing, our limitations as a human being; that, in essence, αἰὼν παῖς ἐστι παίζων πεσσεύων· παιδὸς ἡ βασιληίη [2], that τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει Κεραυνός [3] and that Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ [4].

Which in practical terms simply amounts to understanding, knowing, Being and the genesis, the φύσις, of beings. Or, expressed in terms of the philosophy of pathei-mathos, it amounts to wu-wei, and to the understanding that 'what and who' are out of range of our empathy and what and who we have no personal knowledge of, is and are of no concern, of no passionate relevance, for us, because 'beyond the control, the influence' of our own fallible, error-prone, nature, and should thus be regarded 'without prejudice', as 'innocent', and the subject of no opinion, no ideations, by us. That is, we accept empathy and pathei-mathos as our guide, and (i) we do not speculate about, do not manufacture our own ideations about, those whom and that which are beyond the purveu of our empathy; and (ii) we do not accept the ideations/abstractions of others concerning those whom and that which are beyond the purveu of our empathy, and who and which we have no direct personal experience of.

Thus the process, the discovery, the reformation, is a natural one that does not involve any theory, or dogma, or praxis, or require any faith or belief of any kind. There is the personal cultivation of empathy and wu-wei, and that is all. How then - for those not having endured a personal πάθει μάθος - might empathy and wu-wei be cultivated, and thus how might the natural balance be found/restored, thus allowing ψυχή to flourish, bringing ἁρμονίη and σωφρονεῖν?

We might let go of ideations, of causal abstractions, many or most of which only serve to try and distinguish us from them, from other living-beings, human or otherwise, and thus increase our illusion of separation. We might consider, ponder on, the cosmic perspective and learn to value tolerance and humility. We might muse on innocence and the nature of the good, for the good is simply what is fair; what is compassionate, what inclines us to appreciate the numinous and understand why ὕβρις is an error of unbalance. We might consider why, for example, the bad is just bad φύσις. Or a natural consequence of undeveloped, unformed, not-mature, unreformed φύσις. Of a lack of empathy, of a lack of εὐταξία, of little or no appreciation of, of no personal experience of, the numinous, leading thus to individuals doing what is unfair; what is harsh and unfeeling; what intentionally causes or contributes to suffering.

We could, for example, and perhaps importantly, learn from the culture of our society and that of others, for correctly appreciated such culture - as manifest, for example, in literature, music, memoirs, poetry, history, Art, and sometimes in myths and legends and religious allegories - is but the recorded/aural pathei-mathos and empathic understanding of others over decades, centuries, millennia.

David Myatt

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[1] Fragments 53 and 80
[2] Fragment 52
[3] Fragment 64
[4] Fragment 123

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Hermetica And Alchemy

David Myatt Selected Writings

Corpus Hermeticum I, III, IV, VI, VIII, XI, XII, XIII
Translations and Commentaries

A Note Concerning Noesis In Tractate XIII

Anaximander, Imbalance, And Opposites

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Translation and Commentary

David Myatt

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Bibliography

Preface

This work collects together my translations of and commentaries on the eight tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum which were published separately between 2013 and 2017. From the fourteen Greek tractates that have been traditionally referred to as the Corpus Hermeticum, I chose the eight (the ogdoad) whose texts I considered were the most metaphysical and mystical and thus which can provide an understanding of what came to be termed hermeticism.

In the case of the Corpus Hermeticum, the task of translating ancient Greek into English is complicated by the terminology used in the text. Words such as λόγος, νοῦς, πνεῦμα, δημιουργόν, φῶς, ψυχή (καὶ τὰ λοιπά), all require careful consideration if the text is to be understood in relation to the cultural milieu existing at the time of its composition; a milieu where a Hellenistic paganism, of various types and hues, thrived alongside the still relatively new religion of Christianity.

All too often, such Greek words are translated by an English word which has, over centuries, acquired a meaning which is not or which may not be relevant to that milieu, resulting in a 'retrospective reinterpretation' of the text. One thinks here of (i) θεός translated as god or as God, and of λόγος translated as 'word' (or Word) which thus suffuse, or can suffuse, the text with the meanings that nearly two thousand years of Christian exegesis have ascribed to those terms; of (ii) νοῦς translated as either "intellect" or as "mind", neither of which is satisfactory especially given what both of those English words have come to denote, philosophically and otherwise, in the centuries since the Greek tractates were written. In an effort to avoid such retrospective reinterpretation here, and the preconceptions thus imposed upon the text, I have sometimes used transliterations, sometimes used a relatively obscure English word, and sometimes used a new term.

However, given that the goal of the translator is to provide for the general reader an intelligible interpretation of the text, to utilize transliterations for every problematic word would fail to accomplish that goal. Which is why the translator has to use their judgement and why every translation is 'a fallible interpretation of meaning'.

The methodology of using some transliterations, some relatively obscure

English words, and some new term or expression (such as noetic sapientia) results in a certain technical - an 'esoteric' - vocabulary which requires or may require contextual, usually metaphysical, interpretation. Often, the interpretation is provided by reference to the matters discussed in the particular tractate; sometimes by reference to other tractates; and sometimes by considering Ancient Greek, and Greco-Roman, philosophy and mysticism. Occasionally, however, the interpretation is to leave some transliteration - such as physis, φύσις - as a basic term of the particular hermetic weltanschauung described in a particular tractate and, as such, as a term which has no satisfactory English equivalent, metaphysical or otherwise, and therefore to assimilate it into the English language. All of which make these translations rather different from other English versions, past and present, with these translations hopefully enabling the reader to approach and to appreciate the hermetic texts sans preconceptions, modern and otherwise, and thus provide an intimation of how such texts might have been understood by those who read them, or heard them read, in the milieu of their composition.

One of the intentions of these translations of mine of various tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum is provide an alternative approach to such ancient texts and hopefully enable the reader without a knowledge of Greek (and of the minutiae of over a century of scholarly analysis of the Greek text) to appreciate the texts anew and understand why they have - in the original Greek - been regarded as important documents in respect of particular, ancient, weltanschauungen that have, over the centuries, proved most influential and which can still be of interest to those interested in certain metaphysical speculations and certain esoteric matters.

Why an alternative approach to such ancient texts? Because current, and past interpretations - based on using terms such as God, Mind, and Soul - make them appear to be proto-Christian or imbued with an early Christian weltanschauung or express certain philosophical and moralistic abstractions. Also, because I incline toward the view that such texts, in the matter of cosmogony and metaphysics, are more influenced by the classical Greek and the Hellenistic ethos than by any other, and thus in many ways are representative of that ethos as it was being developed, or as it was known, at the time texts such as those in the Corpus Hermeticum were written. An ethos, a cosmogony and a metaphysics, exemplified - to give just a few examples - by terms such as ἀρρενόθηλυς (Poemander), by the shapeshifting of Poemander (τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἠλλάγη τῇ ἰδέᾳ), by mention of a septenary system (Poemander, Tractate XI), by the 'voyages of the psyche' (Tractate XI: 20) and by terms such as Ιερός Λόγος (Tractate III) and which term dates back to the time of Hesiod [1].

In respect, for example, of the Ιερός Λόγος tractate, my view is that it is the story of genesis according to an ancient pagan, and esoteric, weltanschauung; a text in all probability older than the other texts in the Corpus Hermeticum and certainly older, as an aural tradition, than the story given in the Biblical

Genesis; and a text which the author of the Poemandres tractate might well have been familiar with, as a reading of both texts indicates.

As an example of my alternative approach (and perhaps the most controversial example) is my interpretation of ἀγαθός as honour/nobility /honesty, τὸ ἀγαθὸν as the honourable/the noble/nobility, and thus as embodied in noble, trustworthy, honest, individuals, and which interpretation I am inclined to view as an expression of both the classical Greek and the Greco-Roman (Hellenic) ethos, including the ethos of Greco-Roman mysticism, just as the expression τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια, attributed to a certain Roman, is an expression of that ethos; whereas ἀγαθός as some disputable 'abstract', impersonal or philosophical 'good' does not in my view exemplify that ethos and the milieu in which it flourished. Furthermore, given how such a disputable 'abstract', moral, good has been generally understood for the last millennia (partly due to the influence of Christianity, partly due to post-Renaissance philosophy, and partly due to Western jurisprudence) then it seems desirable to avoid using the term 'good' in translations of such ancient texts - as also elsewhere, in other metaphysical tractates of the Hellenic era - since 'good' now has certain post-Hellenic connotations which can distance us from what such ancient tractates may well have expressed. [2]

In respect of the texts, I incline toward the view that they generally represent the personal weltanschauung of their authors germane to their time. That is, that rather than being representative of some axiomatical pre-existing philosophy or of some religious school of thought, they reproduce the insight and the understanding of individuals regarding particular metaphysical matters; an insight and an understanding no doubt somewhat redolent of, and influenced by, and sometimes perhaps paraphrasing, some such existing philosophies and/or some such schools of thought; and an insight which often differs from tractate to tractate.

Regarding my translation, some may well consider the words of Diogenes Laertius - *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 3.1 (64) - in relation to Plato, quite apposite:

> χρῆται δὲ ὁ Πλάτων ἐνίοτε αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κακοῦ: ἔστι δ᾽ ὅτε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μικροῦ. πολλάκις δὲ καὶ διαφέρουσιν ὀνόμασιν ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σημαινομένου χρῆται.

For I have sometimes translated the same Greek word in two different ways in order to try and elucidate the meaning of the text [exempli gratia: ἀπεριόριστον, as undefinable and unmeasurable] just as I have idiosyncratically translated certain Greek words [exempli gratia: ἅγιος, as numinous], differences and idiosyncrasies I have endeavoured to explain in my commentary.

The Greek text used is that of A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus*

Hermeticum, Third Edition, 1972. Occasionally I have followed the reading of the MSS or the emendations of others rather than Nock's text with such variations noted in my commentary. Text enclosed in angled brackets < > indicates a conjectural editorial addition, and <...> indicates a lacuna.

David Myatt
2017

[1] a) ἔστι λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ ἱρὸς λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 48, s3. (b) ἔστι ἱρὸς περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 62, s2. (c) ἔστι δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν ἱρὸς λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 81, s2.

[2] I have endeavoured to explain such interpretations in various essays, including (i) *Some Examples Regarding Translation and Questions of Interpretation,* (ii) *Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum*; and (iii) *Cicero On Summum Bonum*.

Ποιμάνδρης

Pœmandres

Tractate I

Introduction

The Greek text of the tractate often referred to as the Pœmandres/Pymander part of the Corpus Hermeticum was first published by Turnebus in Paris in 1554 and of the origin of the knowledge expounded in the text, the author declares at v.2 that

> εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμάνδρης ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς οἶδα ὃ βούλει καὶ σύνειμί σοι πανταχοῦ

Which implies - qv. my translation, and notes and commentary on the text - that what Pœmandres is about to reveal is an authentic perceiveration, and this supernatural being [or archetype] knows what is desired/wanted because, like the guardian daemons of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is close by.

What is revealed is a summary of that weltanschauung that has been termed hermetic philosophy; a summary widely regarded as an important hermetic text and as dating from the second or the third century CE; and a summary which contains many interesting notions and allusions, such as logos, physis/Physis, the septenary system, the gospel of John, the feminine character of Physis/Nature, the doxology Agios o Theos, and θεός as being both male and female in one person - that is, either *ἀνδρόγυνος* or (more controversially) bisexual.

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Translation

[1] Once, while concentrating on and pondering what is real, my intuitions freely flowed, and, my alertness dulled as from an excess of wearisome bodily toil or too much eating, it seemed as if a huge being - too large to measure -

chanced by calling out my name and asking what it was I wanted to see and hear about and learn and have knowledge of.

[2] Who are you, I asked.

I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority, knowing your desires and eachwhere with you.

[3] I answered that I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings, and to have knowledge of theos. That is what I want to hear.

So he said to me, remember all those things you wanted to learn, for I shall instruct you.

[4] So saying, his form altered whereupon I at once sensed everything; an indefinity of inner sight, with everything suffused in phaos - bright and clear - so that from this seeing, a desire. But all too soon there came down upon it a heavy darkness - stygian, strange - and slithering <as a serpent> until that darkness changed in physis: flowing, of an untellable disorder, with smoke as from a fire and an indescribable sound followed by some aphonous noise as if phaos was calling out.

[5] And then, from the phaos, a numinous logos came upon that physis with pure Fire going forth to the height of that physis; easily and effective and efficient. Since Air is agile, it followed the pnuema, up and above Earth and Water and as far as Fire, to be as if it were hanging from that, there.

Earth and Water remained, coagulating together such that <Earth> could not be seen apart from Water until they were stirred by the sound of the pneumal logos that came down upon them.

[6] Pœmandres asked, had I apprehended the sense of that inner seeing? And I said I shall have knowledge of it.

I am, he said, that phaos; perceiveration, your theos, and prior to the flowing physis brought forth from darkness. [And] the phaomal logos, from perceiveration, is the child of theos.

So I said for him to continue.

Then know that within you - who hears and sees - is logos kyrios, although perceiveration is theos the father. They are not separated, one from the other, because their union is Life.

Thank you, I said.

Then discover phaos and become familiar with it.

[7] So saying, he stared at me for so long a duration that I shivered because of the way he looked. But, as he tilted his head back, I, observing, discovered the phaos of unmeasurable forces and an undefinable cosmic order coming-into-being. While the fire, embraced by a strong force, was subdued and kept in stasis.

Such I observed and discovered because of those words of Pœmandres. But, since I was vexed, he spoke to me again. From your seeing, an awareness of the quidditas of semblance; of the primal before the origin without an end.

This was what Pœmandres said to me, then.

[8] So I asked from what place, then, the parsements of physis?

To which he answered, from the deliberations of theos, who, having comprehended the logos and having seen the beauty of the cosmic order, re-presented it, and so became a cosmic order from their own parsements and by the birth of Psyche.

[9] Theos, the perceiveration, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiveration, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate.

[10] Directly, from the downward parsements, the logos of theos bounded to the fine artisements of Physis and joined with the perceiveration of that artisan, for it was of the same essence. Thus the descending parsements of Physis were left, devoid of logos, to be only substance.

[11] The perceiveration of that artisan, in combination with logos, surrounded the spheres, spinning them around, a twizzling of artisements of some indefinite origin and some undeterminable end, finishing where they began. Turning around and around as perceiveration decreed, the spheres produced, from those descending parsements, beings devoid of logos, for they were not given logos, while Air produced what flew, and Water what swam. Divided, one from the other, were Earth and Water, as perceiveration had decreed, with Earth delivering from within herself beings four-footed and crawling, and animals savage and benign.

[12] Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all, brought forth in his own likeness a most beautiful mortal who, being his child, he loved. And theos, who loved his own image, bequeathed to him all his works of Art.

[13] Thus, having discovered what that artisan with that father's assistance had wrought, he too determined on such artisements, which the father agreed to. Ingressing to the artisan's realm, with full authority, he appreciated his

brother's artisements, and they - loving him - each shared with him their own function.

Having fully learned their essence, and having partaken of their physis, he was determined to burst out past the limit of those spheres to discover the one who imposed their strength upon the Fire.

[14] With full authority over the ordered cosmos of humans and of beings devoid of logos, he burst through the strength of the spheres to thus reveal to those of downward physis the beautiful image of theos.

When she beheld such unceasing beauty - he who possessed all the vigour of the viziers and was the image of theos - she lovingly smiled, for it was as if in that Water she had seen the semblance of that mortal's beautiful image and, on Earth, his shadow. And as he himself beheld in that Water her image, so similar to his own, he desired her and wanted to be with her.
Then, his want and his vigour realized, and he within that image devoid of logos, Physis grasped he whom she loved to entwine herself around him so that, as lovers, they were intimately joined together.

[15] Which is why, distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. Yet, although deathless and possessing full authority, the human is still subject to wyrd. Hence, although over the harmonious structure, when within become the slave. Male-and-female since of a male-and-female father, and wakeful since of a wakeful one. <...>

[16] <...> my perceiveration, for I also love the logos. Then Pœmandres said, this is a mysterium esoteric even to this day. For Physis, having intimately joined with the human, produced a most wondrous wonder possessed of the physis of the harmonious seven I mentioned before, of Fire and pneuma. Physis did not tarry, giving birth to seven male-and-female humans with the physis of those viziers, and ætherean.

Pœmandres, I said, a great eagerness has now arrived in me so that I yearn to hear more. Do not go away.

Then, Pœmandres replied, be silent for this primary explanation is not yet complete.

I shall, I said, therefore, be silent.

[17] To continue, those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Æther, the pnuema, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceiveration; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion.

[18] Now listen to the rest of the explanation you asked to hear. When the cycle was fulfilled, the connexions between all things were, by the deliberations of theos, unfastened. Living beings - all male-and-female then - were, including humans, rent asunder thus bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral. Directly, then, theos spoke a numinous logos: propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning, all you creations and artisements, and let the perceiver have the knowledge of being deathless and of Eros as responsible for death.

[19] Having so spoken, foreknowing - through wyrd and that harmonious structure - produced the coagulations and founded the generations with all beings spawning according to their kind. And they of self-knowledge attained a particular benefit while they who, misled by Eros, love the body, roamed around in the dark, to thus, perceptively, be afflicted by death.

[20] But why, I asked, do the unknowing err so much that they are robbed of immortality.

You seem, he said, not to have understood what you heard, for did I not tell you to discover things?

I said I do recall and am discovering, for which I am obliged.

Then tell me, if you have discovered, why death is expected for those in death.

Because originally the body began with that stygian darkness, from whence the flowing physis which formed the body within the perceptible cosmic order which nourishes death.

[21] Your apprehension is correct. Yet why, according to the logos of theos, does the one of self-discovery progress within themselves?

To which I replied, phaos and Life formed the father of all beings, from whence that human came into being.

You express yourself well. For phaos and Life are the theos and the father from whence the human came into being. Therefore if you learn to be of Life and phaos - and that you perchance are of them - then you progress to return to Life. Thus spoke Pœmandres.

Can you - who are my perceiveration - therefore tell me how I may progress to Life? For does not theos say that the human of perceiveration should have self-knowledge?

[22] And do not all humans posses perceiveration?

Again you express yourself well. I, perceiveration, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

Before they hand over their body to its death they loathe the influencing impressions, for they know their vigour. That is, I - perceiveration - do not allow what the vigour of the body embraces to be achieved. For, as guardian, I close the entrance to the bad and the dishonourably vigorful, preventing their procrastinations.

[23] I keep myself distant from the unreasonable, the rotten, the malicious, the jealous, the greedy, the bloodthirsty, the hubriatic, instead, giving them up to the avenging daemon, who assigns to them the sharpness of fire, who visibly assails them, and who equips them for more lawlessness so that they happen upon even more vengeance. For they cannot control their excessive yearnings, are always in the darkness - which tests them - and thus increase that fire even more.

[24] You, perceiveration, have instructed me well about all those things I saught. But could you tell me how the Anados will occur?

To which Pœmandres replied, first, the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed with the semblance it had disappearing and its now non-functioning ethos handed over to the daimon, with the body's perceptions returning to their origin, then becoming separated with their purpose, transplanted, and with desire and eagerness journeying toward the physis devoid of logos.

[25] Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait.

[26] Thus, stripped of the activities of that structure, they enter into the ogdoadic physis, and, with those there, celebrate the father in song for they, together, rejoice at this arrival who, now akin to them, hears those forces beyond the ogdoadic physis celebrating theos in melodious song. Then, in order, they move toward the father to hand themselves over to those forces, and, becoming those forces, they become united with theos. For to so become of theos is the noble goal of those who seek to acquire knowledge.

Why, therefore, hesitate? Should it not be that, having received all these things,

you should become a guide to those who are suitable so that, because of you, descendants of mortals may - through theos - escape?

[27] Having so spoken to me, Pœmandres joined with those forces, while I, having given thanks to and expressed my gratitude toward the father of all beings, went forth strengthened and informed regarding the physis of everything and with an insight of great importance.

So it was that I began to tell mortals about how beautiful knowledge and an awareness of the numinous were. You earth-bound mortals, you who have embraced intoxicating liquor, sleepfulness, and are unknowing of theos: soberize, stop your drunkenness, for you are beguiled by irrational sleepfulness.

[28] Hearing this, they, with the same purpose, gathered round. And I said, you who are earth-bound, why do you embrace death when you have the means to partake of immortality? Change your ways, you who have accompanied deception and who have kinship with the unknowing ones. Leave the dark phaos, partake of immortality, move away from your destruction.

[29] Then some of them, having ridiculed, went away, embracing as they did the way of death; although some others, desirous of being informed, threw themselves down at my feet. I asked them to stand, and thus became a guide to those of my kind, informing them of the logoi - of the way and the means of rescue - and engendered in them the logoi of sapientia, with the celestial elixir to nurture them.

And with the arrival of evening with the rays of Helios beginning to completely wane, I bid they express their gratitude to theos, after which - with that expression of gratitude completed - they each retired to their own bed.

[30] Commemorating within myself the noble service of Pœmandres - replete with what I had desired - I was most pleased, for the sleep of the body engendered temperance of psyche, the closing of the eyes a genuine insight, with my silence pregnant with the noble, and the expression of the logos breeding nobility.

Such is what transpired for me, received from perceiveration - that is, Pœmandres; for it was by being theos-inspired that I came upon this revealing. Therefore, from my psyche and with all my strength, I offer benedictions to theos, the father.

[31]

> Agios o Theos, father of all beings.
> Agios o Theos, whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts.
> Agios o Theos, whose disposition is to be recognized and who is recognized by his own.

Agios es, you who by logos form all being.
Agios es, you who engender all physis as eikon.
Agios es, you whom the Physis did not morph.
Agios es, you who are mightier than all artifice.
Agios es, you who surpass all excellence.
Agios es, you who transcend all praise.

You - ineffable, inexpressible, to whom silence gives voice - receive these respectful wordful offerings from a psyche and a heart that reach out to you.

[32] I ask of you to grant that I am not foiled in acquiring knowledge germane to our essence; to invigorate me, so that - by that favour - I may bring illumination to the unknowing who, kindred of my kind, are your children.

Such I testify and believe; to advance to Life and phaos. For you, father, a benediction. Your mortal's purpose is to share in your numinosity, for which you have provided every means.

°°°

Notes and Commentary on the Text

The numbers refer to the sections of the Greek text, 1-32.

1.

what is real. Regarding τῶν ὄντων cf. Plato, Republic, Book 7 (532c) - πρὸς δὲ τὰ ἐν ὕδασι φαντάσματα θεῖα καὶ σκιὰς τῶν ὄντων ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ εἰδώλων σκιὰς δι᾽ ἑτέρου τοιούτου φωτὸς ὡς πρὸς ἥλιον κρίνειν ἀποσκιαζομένας - where the φάντασμα (the appearance) of some-thing natural (god-given), such as the σκιὰ (image) that is reflected by water, is stated to be real, and contrasted with what is not considered to be real (what is an unsubstantial image) such as that cast by a fire rather than by the Sun.

intuition. For διανοίας. As with *νοῦς* (see 2. below) a term which deserves some scrutiny. Conventionally, it is translated as 'thought', or 'thinking', as if in reference to some sort of idealized faculty we human beings are said to possess and which faculty deals with ideations and their collocations and is considered as necessary to, or the foundation of, understanding and reason.

More accurately, in a classical context, *διανοίας* is (i) 'intelligence' (or intuition) in the sense of understanding some-thing or someone (i.e. in being able to perceive some-thing correctly or to correctly understand - to know - a person), or (ii) 'intention'.

I have opted for 'intuition' as suggesting, and as manifesting, insight, often from

contemplation, as the etymology, from the Latin *intueri*, suggests. For the English word 'thought' now conveys modern meanings which, in my view, are not relevant here. And an 'intuition' that is related to, but somewhat different from, the perceiveration that is *νοῦς*.

Alertness. αἴσθησις. Alertness here in the sense that the normal, alert, awareness of the physical senses is dulled by interior intuition, insight, or revelation. An appropriate alternative translation would thus be *awareness*, as in awareness of one's surroundings.

Huge. ὑπερμεγέθη - qv Plutarch *Romulus*, 16.5 ἐπὶ στρατοπέδου δρῦν ἔτεμεν ὑπερμεγέθη - chopped down a huge tree there in that encampment.

Huge, and too large to measure by ordinary means. I do not see any need to exaggerate what is implied, as some other translations do.

Have knowledge of. In the tractate, γνῶναι is related to νοῦς and διανοίας as an expression of what is perceived, or one is aware of. Here, of what one discerns in the sense of distinguishing some-thing from something else and thus 'knowing' of and about that thing.

2.

Pœmandres. Ποιμάνδρης. The older interpretation of 'shepherd of men' is unacceptable because speculative; the speculation being that it derives from ποιμήν, which has a variety of meanings other than shepherd, for example, chief, and owner.

A more recent etymology involves some ancient Egyptian term associated with the god Re. However, this etymology, first proposed by Francis Griffith in the 1920's [qv. W. Scott and A. S. Ferguson: *Hermetica: the ancient Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophical teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924-1936] was based on a linguistic and stylistic analysis of Coptic sources dating well over a millennia after the god Re was worshipped in ancient Egypt.

Also, the book *From Poimandres to Jacob Bohme: Hermetism, Gnosis and the Christian Tradition*, edited by Roelof van den Broek and published in 2000 (Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica) which mentions this etymology by Griffiths and which is often cited as confirming this etymology, does not provide further context in the form of extant Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions or references to papyrus fragments from long before the Coptic period, but instead makes various conjectures, as for example in respect of an alternative Coptic form of the genitive n-re, and relies on other linguistic/stylistic analysis of much later texts.

Until a link can be established to such primary Egyptian sources, or to reliable

sources much earlier than such Coptic texts, I remain unconvinced in respect of the ancient Egyptian origins of the name Ποιμάνδρης, and therefore am inclined to leave it as a personal name, transliterated Pœmandres.

perceiveration. νοῦς. The conventional interpretation here is 'mind', as if in contrast to 'the body' and/or as if some fixed philosophical and abstract principle is meant or implied.

This conventional interpretation is in my view incorrect, being another example of not only retrospective reinterpretation but of using a word which has acquired, over the past thousand years or more, certain meanings which detract from an understanding of the original text. Retrospective reinterpretation because the assumption is that what is being described is an axiomatic, reasoned, philosophy centred on ideations such as Thought, Mind, and Logos, rather than what it is: an attempt to describe, in fallible words, a personal intuition about our existence, our human nature, and which intuition is said to emanate from a supernatural being named Pœmandres.

In addition, one should ask what does a translation such as 'I am Poimandres, mind of sovereignty' [*vide* Copenhaver] actually mean? That there is a disembodied 'mind' which calls itself Pœmandres? That this disembodied 'mind' is also some gargantuan supernatural shapeshifting being possessed of the faculty of human speech? That some-thing called 'sovereignty' has a mind?

I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.

Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action. Hence why, in the Oedipus Tyrannus, Sophocles has Creon voice his understanding of the incipient hubris of Oedipus, of his pride without a purpose, of his apparent inability to understand, to correctly perceive, the situation:

> εἴ τοι νομίζεις κτῆμα τὴν αὐθαδίαν
> εἶναί τι τοῦ νοῦ χωρίς, οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονεῖς.
>
> If you believe that what is valuable is pride, by itself,
> Without a purpose, then your judgement is not right.
>
> vv. 549-550

Translating νοῦς as perceiverance/perceiveration thus places it into the correct context, given αὐθεντίας - authority. For "I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority" implies "What [knowledge] I reveal (or am about to reveal) is authentic," so that an alternative translation, in keeping with the hermeticism of the text, would be "I am Pœmandres, the authentic perceiveration." [The English word authentic means 'of authority, authoritative' and is derived, via Latin, from the Greek *αὐθεντία*]

eachwhere. An unusual but expressive (c.15th century) English word, suited to such an esoteric text. The meaning here is that, like a guardian δαίμων of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is always close by: eachwhere with you.

3.

Apprehend. νοέω. To apprehend also in the sense of 'discover'. Again, I have tried to make a subtle distinction here, as there is in the text between the related νοῦς, γνῶναι, and διανοίας.

physis. A transliteration, to suggest something more than what 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denotes. That is, to know what is real and apprehend the physis of those real things - νοῆσαι τὴν τού των φύσιν; to discern the physis, the true nature, of beings. That is, to have an understanding of ontology; for physis is a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being.

γνῶναι τὸν θεόν. To have - to acquire - knowledge of θεός. Does θεός here mean God, a god, a deity, or the god? God, the supreme creator Being, the only real god, the father, as in Christianity? A deity, as in Hellenic and classical paganism? The god, as in an un-named deity - a god - who is above all other deities? Or possibly all of these? And if all, in equal measure, or otherwise?

The discourse of Pœmandres, as recounted in the tractate, suggests two things. First, that all are meant or suggested - for example, Τὸ φῶς ἐκεῖνο, ἔφη, ἐγὼ νοῦς ὁ σὸς θεός could be said of Pœmandres as a god, as a deity, as the god, and also possibly of God, although why God, the Father - as described in the Old and New Testaments - would call Himself Pœmandres, appear in such a vision, and declare what He declares about θεός being both male and female in one person, is interesting. Second, that the knowledge that is revealed is of a source, of a being, that encompasses, and explains, all three, and that it is this knowing of such a source, beyond those three conventional ones, that is the key to 'what is real' and to apprehending 'the physis of beings'.

Hence, it is better to transliterate θεός - or leave it as θεός - than to use god; and a mistake to use God, as some older translations do.

remember all those things you want to learn. Ἔχε νῷ: 'hold the awareness' [be aware] of what you said you wanted to learn - that is, 'remember' them; which is better, and more expressive, than the somewhat colloquial and modern 'keep in mind'.

4.

So saying, his form [ἰδέᾳ] altered. For τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἠλλάγη τῇ ἰδέᾳ. Or - more expressively - 'he shapeshifted'. A common theme in Greek mythology and literature, as in the ancient Hymn to Demeter:

> ὣς εἰποῦσα θεὰ μέγεθος καὶ εἶδος ἄμειψε γῆρας ἀπωσαμένη
>
> Having so spoken, the goddess changed in height and cast off that aged appearance

[An] indefinity of inner sight [inner seeing]. ὁρῶ θέαν ἀόριστον. The sense of ὁράω here is metaphorical, of an interior knowing or apprehension not occasioned by the faculty of sight; the inner knowing, for example, that the blind Tiresias has in respect of Oedipus in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles - his apprehension of what Oedipus has done and what he will do. Such an 'inner seeing' includes the Tiresian kind a prophetic knowing as well as the 'interior visions' of a mystic.

In respect of ἀόριστος, I have opted for indefinity, an unusual [read obscure] English word derived c.1600 from indefinite.

phaos. A transliteration of φῶς - using the the Homeric φάος. Since φάος metaphorically (qv. Iliad, Odyssey, Hesiod, etcetera) implies the being, the life, ‘the spark’, of mortals, and, generally, either (i) the illumination, the light, that arises because of the Sun and distinguishes the day from the night, or (ii) any brightness that provides illumination and thus enables things to be seen, I am inclined to avoid the vague English word 'light' which other translations use, and which English word now implies many things which the Greek does not or may not; as for instance in the matter of over a thousand years of New Testament exegesis, especially in reference to the gospel of John. A transliteration requires the reader to pause and consider what phaos may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply; and hopefully thus conveys something about the original text.

Also, φῶς δὲ πάντα γεγενημένα suggests '[with] everything *suffused in* phaos' and not 'everything *became* light' as if to imply that suddenly everything was transformed into 'light'.

clear and bright. εὔδιόν τε καὶ ἰλαρόν - if one accepts the emendation εὔδιόν [clear] then ἰλαρόν might suggest the metaphorical sense of 'bright' (rather

than the descriptive 'cheery') which fits well with the contrasting and following φοβε ρόν τε καὶ στυγνόν.

Downward. κατωφερὲς - cf. Appian, *The Civil Wars*, Book 4, chapter 13 - κατωφερὲς δ᾽ ἐστὶ τὸ πεδίον.

stygian. For στυγνόν, for stygian is a word which in English imputes the sense of the original Greek, as both its common usage, and its literary usage (by Milton, Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, et al) testify. Some-thing dark, gloomy, disliked, abhorred. One might, for example, write that "that river looks as stygian", and as unforgiving, as the water of Styx - ἀμείλικτον Στυγὸς ὕδωρ.

serpent. ὄφει is one of the emendations of Nock, for the meaning of the text here is difficult to discern. Given what follows - re the smoke and fire - it is tempting to agree with Reitzenstein that what may be meant is a not an ordinary serpent but a dragon, δράκοντι, qv. the Iliad (II, 308) and the seven-headed dragon of Revelation 12, 3-17.

flowing (as in fluidic). The sense of ὑγρός here, since what follows - ἀφάτως τεταραγμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδι δοῦσαν - does not suggest either 'watery' or 'moist'. Cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 314 - ταῦτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐποίουν ὑγρᾶν Νεφελᾶν στρεπταιγλᾶν δάιον ὁρμάν - where clouds are described as flowing and in their flowing-moving obscure the brightness (of the day).

aphonous ... phaos calling out. I follow the MSS which have φωτὸς, which Nock emended to πυρός. While the emendation, given the foregoing mention of fire, makes some sense, it does render what follows, with the mention of φωτὸς, rather disjointed. However, if - as I suggested above - φῶς is not translated as 'light', but, as with physis and λόγος [qv. 5. below], is transliterated, then φωτὸς here is fine, for it is as if "phaos was calling out" in an aphonous - an un-human, animal-like, and thus wordless - way from beneath the covering of darkness that has descended down, and descended with an indescribable noise. And aphonous here because covered - smothered, obscured, muffled - by the indescribably noisy darkness. Which leads directly to the mention of φῶς and λόγος in the next part of the text; that is, to the ascension of φῶς and λόγος.

If one reads πυρός, then the interpretation would be that it is the fire which is calling out in an un-human, animal-like, and thus wordless way.

5.

Logos. λόγος. A transliteration, which as with my other transliterations, requires the reader to pause and reflect upon what the term may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply. The common translation as 'Word' does not express or even suggest all the meanings (possible or suggested) of the Greek, especially as Word - as in Word of God - now imputes so much (in so many different often

doctrinal ways) after two thousand years of Christianity and thus tends to lead to a retrospective re-interpretation of the text.

Numinous. ἅγιος. Numinous is better - more accurate - than 'holy' or 'sacred', since these latter English words have been much overused in connexion with Christianity and are redolent with meanings supplied from over a thousand years of exegesis; meanings which may or may not be relevant here.

Correctly understood, numinous is the unity beyond our perception of its two apparent aspects; aspects expressed by the Greek usage of *ἅγιος* which could be understood in a good (light) way as 'sacred', revered, of astonishing beauty; and in a bad (dark) way as redolent of the gods/wyrd/the fates/morai in these sense of the retributive or (more often) their balancing power/powers and thus giving rise to mortal 'awe' since such a restoration of the natural balance often involved or required the death (and sometimes the 'sacrifice') of mortals. It is the numinous - in its apparent duality, and as a manifestation of a restoration of the natural, divine, balance - which is evident in much of Greek tragedy, from the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus (and the Orestia in general) to the *Antigone* and the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles.

The two apparent aspects of the numinous are wonderfully expressed by Rilke:

> Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel
> Ordnungen? und gesetzt selbst, es nähme
> einer mich plötzlich ans Herz: ich verginge von seinem
> stärkeren Dasein. Denn das Schöne ist nichts
> als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen,
> und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmäht,
> uns zu zerstören. Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.

Who, were I to sigh aloud, of those angelic beings might hear me?
And even if one of them deigned to take me to his heart I would dissolve
Into his very existence.
For beauty is nothing if not the genesis of that numen
Which we can only just survive
And which we so admire because it can so calmly disdain to betake us.
Every angel is numinous

> *wenn ich schrie*. 'Were I to sigh aloud' is far more poetically expressive, and more in tune with the metaphysical tone of the poem and the stress on *schrie*, than the simple, bland, 'if I cried out'. A sighing aloud - not a shout or a scream - of the sometimes involuntary kind sometimes experienced by those engaged in contemplative prayer or in deep, personal, metaphysical musings.
>
> *der Engel Ordnungen*. The poetic emphasis is on Engel, and the usual translation here of 'orders' - or something equally abstract and harsh (such as hierarchies) - does not in my view express the poetic beauty

> (and the almost supernatural sense of strangeness) of the original; hence my suggestion 'angelic beings' - of such a species of beings, so different from we mortals, who by virtue of their numinosity have the ability to both awe us and overpower us.

came upon that physis. Came upon that which had the physis of darkness and then changed to become fluidic.

Fire. A capitalization, since 'fire' here is suggestive of something possibly elemental.

Air. A capitalization, as with Fire; ditto with the following Water and Earth.

A possible alternative here might be to use the Homeric meaning of ἀὴρ - mist - since 'air' is just too general, does not describe what is happening, and thus is confusing.

pnuema. For πνεύματι/πνεῦμα. A transliteration, given that the English alternatives - such as 'spirit' or 'breath' - not only do not always describe what the Greek implies but also suggest things not always or not necessarily in keeping with the Hellenic nature of the text.

This particular transliteration has a long history in English, dating back to 1559 CE. In 1918, DeWitt Burton published a monograph - listing, with quotations, the various senses of πνεῦμα - entitled *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918)

I incline toward the view that πνεῦμα here - like λόγος - does not necessarily imply something theological (in the Christian sense or otherwise) but rather suggests an alternative, more personal, weltanschauung that, being a weltanschauung, is undoctrinal and subtle, and which weltanschauung is redolent of Hellenic culture. Subtle and undoctrinal in the way that early alchemical texts are subtle and undoctrinal and try to express, or hint at (however obscurely to us, now), a weltanschauung, and one which is more paganus than Christian.

coagulating. For συμμεμιγμένα, which suggests something more elemental - more actively joined - than just 'mixed or mingled' together.

pneumal logos. πνευματικὸν λόγον. The term *pneumal logos* is interesting and intended to be suggestive and thus open to and requiring interpretation. In contrast, the usual translation is verbo spirituali (spiritual word), as if what is meant or implied is some-thing theological and clearly distinct from the corporeal, as Thomas Aquinas wrote in *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*: Ex quo patet quod nomen verbi magis proprie dicitur de verbo spirituali quam de

corporali. Sed omne illud quod magis proprie invenitur in spiritualibus quam in corporalibus, propriissime Deo competit. Ergo verbum propriissime in Deo dicitur. (*De veritate, q. 4a. 1s. c2).*

6.

apprehended the sense of that inner seeing. Given what follows, the English word 'sense' is perhaps appropriate here, rather than the inflexible word 'meaning'.

phaomal logos. φωτεινὸς λόγος. As with *pneumal logos*, this is suggestive, and open to interpretation.

child of theos. υἱὸς θεοῦ. The scriptural sense - 'son of god', for example Mark 15.39, Ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν - is usually assumed; a sense which follows the general usage of υἱὸς (son) as in Homer et al. But the later (c.2nd/3rd century CE) usage 'child' is possible here, a usage known from some papyri (qv. *Papiri Greci e Latini*, edited by Girolamo Vitelli). This also has the advantage of being gender neutral, for which see the note under ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in section 19.

logos kyrios. λόγος κυρίου (cf. pneumal logos and phaomal logos). Invariably translated as 'word of the lord', echoing the formula found in LXX (qv. for example Jeremiah 1.4 ἐγένετο λόγος κυρίου πρός με) although, as attested by many papyri, kyrios was also used in the Hellenic world as an epithet both of a deity and of a powerful potentate [hence 'logos kyrios' rather than 'kyrios logos'] implying respect and an acknowledgement of their authority and power.

7.

duration. For reasons I outlined in the *The Art of Translation, and A Question About Time* section of Appendix I, I prefer to translate χρόνος as duration (or something akin) and not as 'time'. Briefly explained, the English word 'time' now denotes what the term χρόνος did not.

tilted his head back. Perhaps suggestive of looking up toward the heavens, qv. the c. 2nd century CE writer Achilles Tatius (writing around the time the Corpus Hermeticum was written) who, in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Book V, 3.3, wrote - ἀνανεύσας εἰς οὐρανὸν ‘ὦ Ζεῦ, τί τοῦτο’ ἔφην ‘φαίνεις ἡμῖν τέρας

unmeasurable. ἀπεριόριστον - beyond being countable, impossible to be counted; from ἀριθμητός - countable.

cosmic order. κόσμος. The word 'cosmos' by itself is probably insufficient here, for the Greek term κόσμος carries with it the suggestion that the cosmos is an ordered structure, an order evident in the observed regularity of heavenly bodies such as the moon, the constellations, and the planets.

undefinable. ἀπεριόριστον: A slightly different sense here to previously, and an interesting contrast with εὐπεριόριστον - well-defined - as used by Strabo when describing the process of measuring and defining, in geographical terms, a region of the Earth:

> τὸ γὰρ σημειῶδες καὶ τὸ εὐπεριόριστον ἐκεῖθεν λαβεῖν ἔστιν, οὗ χρείαν ἔχει ὁ γεωγράφος: εὐπεριόριστον δέ, ὅταν ἢ ποταμοῖς ἢ ὄρεσιν ἢ θαλάττῃ δυνατὸν ᾖ (*Geography*, 2.1.30)

coming-into-being. γεγενημένον. The meaning here is somewhat obscure. Is what is described a discovery of how the already existing and known cosmic order *came* into being, or the apprehension of a - or some sort of - cosmic order coming-into-being? Or does γεγενημένον refer to phaos?

8.

quidditas of semblance. ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος. The transliteration 'archetype' here is, unfortunately, unsuitable, given what the term archetype now suggests and implies (vide Jungian psychology, for example) beyond what the Greek of the text means. Appropriate words or terms such as 'primal-pattern' or 'protoform' are awkward, clumsy. Hence quidditas (11th/12th century Latin), from whence came 'quiddity', a term originally from medieval scholasticism which was then used to mean the natural (primal) nature or form of some-thing, and thus hints at the original sense of ἀρχέτυπον. As used here, quidditas means exactly what ἀρχέτυπον does in the text, sans Jungian psychology; sans modern 'popular psychology'; sans expositions of hermetic/gnostic philosophy (or what is assumed to be a hermetic/gnostic philosophy) and sans expositions of Plato's philosophy.

The whole passage - τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος, τὸ προάρχον τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς ἀπεράντου - is concerned with various shades of ἀρχή, and is rather obscure. ἀρχή as the origin - 'the beginning' - of beings and thus of their εἶδος (the ἀρχέτυπον), of their semblance, their type; and ἀρχή - the primal before (προάρχον) that beginning, of beings - as that origin (that beginning) which has no end, no known limits, ἀπεράντου.

parsements. For στοιχεῖον, and thus avoiding the word 'elements' whose meanings, being now many and varied, somewhat detract from the meaning of the text. By a parsement - an unusual variant of partiment (from the Latin partimentum) - is meant the fundamental (the basic, elemental, primal) components or principles of 'things' as understood or as posited in Hellenic times; and whether or not these are undescribed or described in terms of a particular philosophy or weltanschauung (for example, as Air, Fire, and so on).

deliberations of theos. βουλῆς θεοῦ. 'Deliberations' is the sense here; as in theos - whomsoever or whatever theos is - having pondered upon, or considered, a

particular matter or many matters. cf. Herodotus [Histories, 9.10] - ὃ μέν σφι ταῦτα συνεβούλευε: οἳ δὲ φρενὶ λαβόντες τὸν λόγον αὐτίκα - where a similar following expression (λαβόντες τὸν λόγον) occurs.

Translations such as 'will/decree of god' are, in my view, far too presumptive.

ἥτις λαβοῦσα τὸν λόγον. This is suggestive of theos having fully comprehended - completely understood - logos [qv. the passage from Herodotus, where the result of the deliberations was understood, approved of: 'taken to heart'], rather than of God 'taking in the Word' or 'receiving the Word'. A 'taking in' from whence to where? A 'receiving' from where?

re-presented. In the sense of a divine mimesis - *μίμησις* - which is the Greek word used here, and which mimesis is a important theme in ancient pagan culture, from Art to religion. It is tempting therefore to consider the suggestion that this mimesis by theos is akin to a masterful, a sublime, work of Art.

Psyche. For ψυχή, and leaving untranslated so as not to impose a particular meaning on the text. Whether what is meant is *anima mundi* - or some-thing else, such as the 'soul' of a human being - is therefore open to debate, although I have used a capital P to intimate that it is, in the text, an important, and primal, principle, and might imply here the original sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; of that 'thing' [or being] which [or who] animates beings making them 'alive'.

9.

male-and-female. ἀρρενόθηλυς. The theos - or deity/divinity/God - is both male and female, which can be interpreted as implying a bisexual nature, or androgyny, or hermaphroditism, or a being with the unique ability to both give birth and inseminate, or a being beyond all such mortal (causal) categories and assumptions.

whose logos brought forth another perceiveration. ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν. An interesting phrase, possibly open to interpretation, for it might suggest 'whose utterance [who by speaking] brought forth...'

Consider, for example, Psalms 33.6:

> τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἐστερεώθησαν καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν
>
> בִּדְבַר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּיו כָּל־ צְבָאָם

with the Greek of LXX, literally translated, meaning "By the logos of the master [κύριος] the heavens were established and, by the pnuema from his mouth, all

their influence" [δύναμις], with the Hebrew stating it is יְהוָה [Yhvh - Jehovah] who has established שָׁמַיִם [shamayim, the heavens] and His וּבְרוּחַ [ruach, pneuma] their power.

Hence, Pœmandres might well be saying that is was by speaking, by the act of uttering or declaiming a logos, that this theos - whomsoever or whatever theos is - brought forth a[nother] perceiveration; that is, another way or means of apprehending - of knowing, understanding, and appreciating - the cosmic order.

artisan. δημιουργόν. It is tempting to transliterate - as demiourgos - so as not to impose a meaning on the text. Does the word here imply - as possibly with Fire, pneuma, etcetera - an assumed elemental force of principle? Or a demiurge who is a (or the) theos of Fire and pnuema? Or does it imply some creator, the Theos of Fire and Pnuema? Or is some sort of artisan meant? And is this an artisan who, possibly by memesis, can create/manufacture a sublime work of Art that at the very least enables us to perceive the cosmic order - the world - in a new way and who, being a theos, can also possibly create, perhaps as a work of Art, a new cosmic order?

However, I incline toward the view, given what follows - ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτά [see below, *fashioned seven viziers*] - that what is meant here is artisan, rather than demiurge.

fashioned seven viziers. ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτά.

The word ἐδημιούργησε occurs in Diogenes Laertius [*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 3.1 (71) - ὅτι καὶ τὸ ὑπόδειγμα ἓν ἦν ἀφ᾽ οὗ αὐτὸν ἐδημιούργησε] in the section concerned with Plato, where the meaning is what someone (such as a worker or artisan) has wrought, fashioned, or produced.

Viziers captures the meaning of διοικητάς (at the time the text was written) in a way that terms such as controllers, procurators, governors, do not, given the modern senses such terms now have and especially given the context, ἡ διοίκησις αὐτῶν εἱμαρμένη καλεῖται: that their administration - how these viziers discharge their duties; how they operate given their powers - "is described as fate." That is, is understood, by we mortals, as fate or destiny.

Vizier is a term used in Persia (in its various older forms) and ancient Egypt (a transcription of a hieroglyph), and also later on in the Middle East and North Africa following the rise of Islam, to denote a person who governed or who ruled over - in the name of a higher authority - a particular region or territory or who had a particular sphere of influence; a role similar to the Viceroy of the British Empire.

The seven viziers are the seven classical planetary bodies, named Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Sun, Jupiter, and Saturn, and well-described in ancient

texts, from ancient Persia onwards. Copenhaver [*Hermetica, The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.105] refers to some of the scholarly literature regarding these 'seven'.

*sphere*s. The context - the cosmic order, and especially the seven planetary viziers who surround or encompass - suggest the meaning of spheres (or orbs) rather than 'circles'. Cf. Sophocles, Antigone, 415-6 where κύκλος could suggest sphere, or orb, or circle, but where circle seems apposite:

χρόνον τάδ᾽ ἦν τοσοῦτον, ἔστ᾽ ἐν αἰθέρι μέσῳ κατέστη λαμπρὸς ἡλίου κύκλος καὶ καῦμ᾽ ἔθαλπε

And long this continued until Helios with his radiant circle had established himself in middle-sky, burning us

10.

downward parsements ... logos of theos. Given that the MSS have στοιχείων τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος the meaning here is conjectural.

'Downward parsements' implies that the fundamental (elemental, primal) components by their nature had a tendency to descend, rather as rain descends down by nature and not because it is 'heavy' [cf. Xenophon, *On Hunting*, 5.3: ἀφανίζει δὲ καὶ ἡ πολλὴ δρόσος καταφέρουσα αὐτά] Hence 'descending parsements' would also be an appropriate translation here.

Regarding θεοῦ λόγος, I have again opted for a transliteration since the common translation here of 'word of God' imposes a particular, Christian, interpretation on the text, (i) given that 'word of god' is most probably what Cyril of Alexandria meant by the phrase, since τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος interestingly occurs in *Cyrilli Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium*:

> μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος ὁ ἐξ αὐτῆς γεννηθεὶς τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός ὁ ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεὸς ἀληθινός τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φωτός ὁ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο τά τε ἐν τῶι οὐρανῶι καὶ τὰ ἐν τῆι γῆι
>
> only-offspring of the logos of theos, born from the essence [οὐσία] of the father, genuine god from genuine god, the phaos from the phaos, by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being

and (ii) given that this paraphrases the Nicene creed of 325 CE, with the notable exception of μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος instead of τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, the latter conventionally translated as 'only begotten Son of God'.

Thus, were the translation of 'word of god' to be accepted, with the implied meaning from the *Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium*, then Pœmandres is, apparently,

here stating that 'the Word of God' - Jesus of Nazareth, true god from true god, Light from Light, and the only begotten son of God by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being - somehow bounded up to be reunited with the work of the artisan-creator (presumably, in this context, God) who is of the same essence [ὁμοούσιος].

While this is a possible interpretation of the text given that Pœmandres uses the same word, in reference to logos, as Cyril of Alexandria - οὐσία (which correctly understood means the very being - the essential nature/physis, or essence - of someone or some-thing) - it does seem somewhat restrictive, considering (i) the many possible meanings, and shades of meaning, of both λόγος and θεός (before and after the advent of Christianity and especially in the context of pagan, Hellenic, weltanschauungen) and (ii) how theos is described by Pœmandres (for example, as being both male and female).

fine artisements of Physis. Fine - καθαρός; clean and free of defects. Artisement - the product of the skilled work of the artisan and the artist; their artisanship (cf. the 16th century English verb artize) and which artisements include beings of various kinds (including living and/or 'archetypal' ones).

It thus becomes clear, especially given what follows, why transliterating φύσις is better than translating it always as 'nature', as if φύσις here implied what we now, after hundreds years of scientific observation and theories such as that of Darwin, understand as 'the natural world', as a 'nature' that we are or can be or should be masters of and can and do and should control, and which we can (or believe we can) understand.

Physis is capitalized here, as in section 14, to suggest the objectification that the text here implies; and objectified as possibly a being - whomsoever or whatever such a being is - or possibly as some apprehension/emanation of theos (whomsoever or whatever theos is), or some fundamental principle, or some form such as what we now understand as an archetype. This Physis, therefore, might or might not be Nature (as Nature was understood in Hellenic times) although, given what follows about Earth delivering (from her womb) living beings [ἡ γῆ ἐξήνεγκεν ἀπ΄ αὐτῆς ἃ εἶχε ζῷα...] it might be that it is not Nature but something else, for example what may have been understood as the genesis of what we now denote by Nature.

It is interesting that here it is "the descending parsements of physis" (not Physis) who were "left, devoid of logos" while in section 14 it is Physis that is, by implication, described as 'devoid of logos' - ᾤκησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν. This is often understood in the pejorative sense, as if this Physis, and the living beings devoid of logos - ζῷα ἤνεγκεν ἄλογα - in section 11, are somehow [to quote one translation] 'unreasoning' beings (or forms) - lacking in reason - and thus somehow [to quote another translation] 'irrational' compared to (and by extension somewhat inferior to) the 'son of theos', which mistaken and unnecessary value-judgements arise from interpreting and translating λόγος as

'Word' or as meaning/implying 'reason'. However, logos is just logos, and devoid of (without) logos - ἄλογος - could be, depending on how logos is interpreted, akin to ἀθάνατος said in respect, for example, of theos [Θεὸν δ᾽ εἶναι ζῷον ἀθάνατον] or implying 'cannot be reduced to something else' and thus heterogeneous [αἱ δὲ ταύτῃ ἀσύμμετροι ἄλογοι καλείσθωσαν], or lacking the faculty of human speech (as in animals, who are not all 'brutish') or (more esoterically) suggestive of *sans denotatum*, of not denoting things or beings by assigning names or terms to them and thus not distinguishing them or marking them as separate from the whole, the unity, of which one type of wholeness is Physis understood as the goddess of Nature, as the creative force that is the genesis of, and which maintains the balance of, the life which inhabits the Earth.

Substance. ὕλη. Since the Greek term does not exactly mean 'matter' in the modern sense (qv. the science of Physics) it is better to find an alternative. Hence 'substance' - the *materia* of 'things' and living beings - contrasted with οὐσία, essence.

11.

the perceiveration of that artisan. As previously, and like physis, both νοῦς and λόγος are here objectified.

spinning them around. δινῶν ῥοίζῳ.

12.

brought forth...a mortal. ἀπεκύησεν ἄνθρωπον. The word ἀπεκύησεν in relation to πατὴρ perhaps refers back to where theos, the perceiveration, is described as being both male and female [ἀρρενόθηλυς] although whether the meaning here is the literal 'gave birth' or the descriptive 'brought forth' is interesting, especially a different word, ἐξήνεγκεν [which the English word delivered - in the sense of giving birth, of 'a woman having disburdened herself of a fœtus' - usefully describes] is used in reference to the (female) Earth. This different usage, and the Epistle of James, written not long before the Pœmandres tractate where 'brought forth' is apposite [v.1.15 ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον] incline me toward 'brought forth' here.

In respect of ἄνθρωπος (often emended to ᾽Ανθρωπος) the sense here, as often, is the gender neutral 'human being' - a mortal - and not 'a man'.

image. μορφή. Image in both senses of the English term - as outward physical appearance, and as the impression (or concept) that others may have of, or see in, a person.

Image plays an important part in what follows; the image that the son of theos

has of himself and sees reflected back to him and which image he loves. The image Physis has of him and sees a reflection of, and the image which he has of her and which makes him desire her.

bequeathed to him all his works of Art. παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα. This is a very interesting phrase; theos as artisan, as artist, whose works - whose creations, whose artisements, whose divine re-presentations (μίμησις) - apparently include both the cosmic order, the artisan mentioned previously, and we mortals. Less suggestive of the meaning is 'bequeathed to him all his (various) artisements'.

13.

that father. Reading πατρί, with the MSS, and not the emendation πυρί.

Ingressing to the artisan's realm. γενόμενος ἐν τῇ δημιουργικῇ σφαίρᾳ. The realm of the artisan: where the artisan works, and produces artisements and divine works of art, and where someone - here, the mortal, son of theos - can learn and master that skill and produce his own works. This realm is that of the seven spheres, the seven viziers.

function. τάξεως. Cf. Plato, *Laws,* 809d - ἡμερῶν τάξεως εἰς μηνῶν περιόδους καὶ μηνῶν εἰς ἕκαστον τὸν ἐνιαυτόν ἵνα ὧραι καὶ θυσίαι καὶ ἑορταὶ τὰ προσήκοντ᾽ ἀπολαμβάνουσαι ἑαυταῖς ἕκασται τῷ κατὰ φύσιν ἄγεσθαι - where the sense is of the periodic, the orderly, functioning of things; of days into weeks, weeks into months, and of months into a year; and which functionality enables us to know when to celebrate and undertake the seasonal festivals and feasts.

limit. περιφέρεια. Not here the literal Euclidean meaning of circumference [for example, Euclid, *Elements*, Book 13, Proposition 10 - ἐπεὶ ἴση ἐστὶν ἡ ΑΒΓΗ περιφέρεια τῇ ΑΕΔΗ περιφερείᾳ] but rather of the limits, the boundary, set or marked by the seven spheres; a limit that the mortal, son of theos, is "determined to burst out past".

imposed their strength upon the Fire. Cf. section 7 - περιίσχεσθαι τὸ πῦρ δυνάμει μεγίστῃ (the fire, embraced by a strong force).

14.

burst through the strength of the spheres. I follow the reading of the MSS, which have ἀναρρήξας τὸ κράτος τῶν κύκλων, amended by Scott and Nock to ἀναρρήξας τὸ κύτος [burst through the container].

harmonious structure. Here, ἁρμονία implies the 'structure' of the κόσμος, the

cosmic order [qv. the note on κόσμος in section 7] and which structure is harmonious [qv. ἁρμονίας ἐναρμόνιος in section 15].

vigour. ἐνέργεια. The words 'force' and 'energy' bring too many irrelevant modern connotations to the text, and 'vigour' well expresses the meaning of ἐνέργεια here, with the suggestion, as often elsewhere, of 'vigorous activity'.

When she beheld. This, as what follows suggests, is Physis, personified. In respect of beholding such beauty, cf. section 8 - *having seen the beauty of the cosmic order*.

on Earth, his shadow. τὸ σκίασμα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Cf. Diogenes Laertius [*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.146, Zeno] not especially for the similarity - τὸ τῆς γῆς σκίασμα - but more for the interesting section, preceding this mention of the shadow of the moon on Earth during an eclipse, of how the cosmic order came into being [142] and for the equally interesting following discussion [147] which concerns the attributes and images of theos - the god - who is described as 'the father of all', who has both male and female aspects, and which aspects of the divinity are given their classical pagan names with their areas of authority specified. The interest lies in how the classical gods, and the creation of the cosmic order, and thus Hellenic paganism, were understood and remembered not long after the Hermetica was written, and thus how they echo in part some of the metaphysical themes in, and the cosmogony of, the Pœmandres tractate.

Physis grasped [...] *intimately joined together*. ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν. The sense of μίγνυμι here is that of a physical union, a sexual joining together - not of some 'philosophical mingling' of 'forms'. Similarly, περιπλέκω is not some ordinary 'embrace' but a sexual twinning (of limbs). Cf. Hesiod, Theogony, 375 - Κρίῳ δ᾽ Εὐρυβίη τέκεν ἐν φιλότητι μιγεῖσα Ἀστραῖόν.

jumelle. For διπλοῦς. The much underused and descriptive English word jumelle - from the Latin gemellus - describes some-thing made in, or composed of, two parts, and is therefore most suitable here, more so than common words such as 'double' or 'twofold'.

deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. Here, in respect of my choice of English words, I must admit to being influenced by Chapman's lovely poetic translation of the Hymn to Venus from the Homeric Hymns:

> That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man

In respect of οὐσιώδης, I prefer, given the context, 'inner' - suggestive of 'real' - rather than the conventional 'essential'; although 'vital' is an alternative

translation here, suggested by what Eusebius wrote (c.326 CE) about φῶς [phaos] pre-existing even before the cosmic order, with φῶς used by Eusebius to mean Light in the Christian sense:

> τό τε φῶς τὸ προκόσμιον καὶ τὴν πρὸ αἰώνων νοερὰν καὶ οὐσιώδη σοφίαν τόν τε ζῶντα [Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 1, chapter 2]
>
> The Light of the proto-cosmos, the comprehension and vital wisdom existing before the Aeons

wyrd. For ἡ εἱμαρμένη. A much better choice, here, than either 'fate' or 'destiny' given how overused both those words now are and how their interpretation is also now so varied. An overview of how the concept may have been understood in the late Hellenic period (around the time the Hermetica was probably written) is given in the 2nd century CE discourse *De Fato*, attributed to Plutarch, which begins by stating that εἱμαρμένη has been described in two ways, as ἐνέργεια (vigorous activity) and as οὐσία (essence) -

> πρῶτον τοίνυν ἴσθι, ὅτι εἱμαρμένη διχῶς καὶ λέγεται καὶ νοεῖται: ἡ μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἐνέργεια ἡ δ᾽ οὐσία

of a wakeful one <...> There is some text missing, indicated by <...>, for after ἄϋπνος ἀπὸ ἀΰπνου the MSS have κρατεῖται [mastered/ruled by - cf. 4 Maccabees 2.9 ᾗ ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου κρατεῖται διὰ τὸν λογισμὸν]. Although some suggestions have been made as to this missing text (such as "ruled by love and sleep" [ἔρωτος καὶ ὕπνου] - they are purely conjectural.

16.

<...> *my perceiveration*. Again, the suggestions for the missing text are purely conjectural.

a mysterium esoteric. For κεκρυμμένον μυστήριον. The term mysterium - a truth or insight or knowledge about some-thing, which is considered religious and/or metaphysical ('hermetic') and which is unknown/unrevealed to or as yet undiscovered by others, and hence 'mysterious' to them - expresses the meaning of the Greek here (as the word mystery by itself does not). Likewise in respect of esoteric - kept concealed or which is concealed/hidden to most or which is revealed to an individual by someone who already 'knows' what the mysterium in question is.

Hence why I write *a* mysterium here rather than *the* mysterium, and why "a mysterium, esoteric even to this day", is better than the rather bland "the mystery kept hidden until this very day".

possessed the physis of the harmonious seven. The seven viziers. A more literal translation would be 'possessed the physis of the [harmonious] structure of the

seven'. Here, physis could mean 'character' (of a person) or some-thing more archetypal/elemental of which such character or personal characteristics are an outward manifestation.

seven male-and-female humans. These seven humans, born from Physis, are thus akin to both theos and the child of theos who also have a male (a masculous) and a female (a muliebral) aspect. That is, although mortal - having been brought forth by and from divinities - these humans are, in their very being, both male and female and thus, in their creation, dissimilar to ordinary mortals, for reasons which Pœmandres goes on to explain.

In addition, these seven mortals have the same or a similar physis as the 'harmonious seven'.

ætherean. For μεταρσίους. Ætherean is the metaphorical sense of μεταρσίους here, not 'exalted' or 'sublime' (which imply some sort of human admiration or some sort of religious attitude/apprehension). For the sense is similar to what Dio Chrysostom wrote, in his tract on leadership, about the sons of Boreas, who - semi-divine - have the attributes of their father and who are depicted in and belonging to their natural realm:

> ὁποίους τοὺς Βορεάδας ἐνεθυμήθησάν τε καὶ ἔγραψαν οἱ γραφεῖς ἐλαφρούς τε καὶ μεταρσίους ταῖς τοῦ πατρὸς αὔραις συνθέοντας [Orationes, 4.1]

Ætherean is used in the poetic sense - that is, 'supernal', meaning of the harmonious - the heavenly - cosmic order and also refined: of the essence, οὐσία, and thus not just ὕλη, substance (qv. section 10).

Primary explanation. πρῶτον λόγον [cf. Plato, *Republic*, Book 3 [395b] εἰ ἄρα τὸν πρῶτον λόγον διασώσομεν]. An explanation of our origins, as mortals, and thus of the 'first principle' that forms the basis of the 'hermetic weltanschauung'.

17.

those seven came into being in this way. It is interesting to compare 'these seven' with 'the 'nine' and the seven spheres (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Moon) of the Somnium Scipionis described by Cicero:

> Novem tibi orbibus vel potius globis conexa sunt omnia, quorum unus est caelestis, extimus, qui reliquos omnes complectitur, summus ipse deus arcens et continens ceteros; in quo sunt infixi illi, qui volvuntur, stellarum cursus sempiterni. Cui subiecti sunt septem, qui versantur retro contrario motu atque caelum. Ex quibus summum globum possidet illa, quam in terris Saturniam nominant. Deinde est hominum

> generi prosperus et salutaris ille fulgor, qui dicitur Iovis; tum rutilus horribilisque terris, quem Martium dicitis; deinde subter mediam fere regionem Sol obtinet, dux et princeps et moderator luminum reliquorum, mens mundi et temperatio, tanta magnitudine, ut cuncta sua luce lustret et compleat. Hunc ut comites consequuntur Veneris alter, alter Mercurii cursus, in infimoque orbe Luna radiis solis accensa convertitur. Infra autem iam nihil est nisi mortale et caducum praeter animos munere deorum hominum generi datos; supra Lunam sunt aeterna omnia. Nam ea, quae est media et nona, Tellus, neque movetur et infima est, et in eam feruntur omnia nutu suo pondera. [*De Re Publica,* Book VI, 17]
>
> Nine orbs - more correctly, spheres - connect the whole cosmic order, of which one - beyond the others but enfolding them - is where the uppermost deity dwells, enclosing and containing all. There - embedded - are the constant stars with their sempiternal movement, while below are seven spheres whose cyclicity is different, and one of which is the sphere given the name on Earth of Saturn [...]

Muliebral. For θηλυκὴ. The term muliebral derives from the classical Latin word *muliebris*, and is used here to refer to those positive traits, abilities, and qualities, that are conventionally and historically associated with women. Muliebral is more expressive - and more redolent of the meaning of the Greek - than 'feminine', especially given how the word 'feminine' is so often misused (sometimes in a pejorative way).

It should be noted that the older reading of θηλυκὴ γὰρ ὁ ἀὴρ makes Air - not Earth - the muliebral one.

Lustful. For ὀχευτικόν. The sense is similar to ἐπιθυμία as used, for example, in Romans 14.13 - τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖσθε εἰς ἐπιθυμίας [make no intention regarding the flesh, to gratify its carnal desires]

From Æther, the pnuema. ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε. It is best to transliterate αἰθήρ - as Æther - given that it, like Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and pnuema, is an elemental principle, or a type of (or a particular) being, or some-thing archetypal.

cyclic until its completion. μέχρι περιόδου τέλους. I follow the reading of the Turnebus MS, taking περίοδος to refer to a posited cyclic - periodic - cosmic order, of Aeons, which periodicity continues until its purpose is achieved/fulfilled/completed.

18.

the connexions between all things. Compare this unbinding of the cosmic bonds with the 'connexions' that make up the nine spheres in the Somnium Scipionis

[qv. the quotation from Cicero, above].

bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral. ἐγένετο τὰ μὲν ἀρρενικὰ ἐν μέρει τὰ δὲ θηλυκὰ ὁμοίως. The meaning of ἀρρενικὰ and θηλυκὰ are not 'male' and 'female' but rather masculous (masculine) and muliebral (of or considered appropriate to women).

propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning. The same Greek words - αὐξάνεσθε and πληθύνεσθε - occur in LXX, Genesis 1.22: ηὐλόγησεν αὐτὰ ὁ θεὸς λέγων αὐξάνεσθε καὶ πληθύνεσθε ["Theos praised them, saying: propagate and spawn"; Tyndale - "God blessed them saying, grow and multiply"; KJV - "God blessed them saying, Be fruitful and multiply"].

creations and artisements. κτίσματα καὶ δημιουργήματα. Although κτίσμα is generally translated here as 'creature' (as also for example in most translations of Revelation 5.13) I incline toward the view, given the context, that the more general sense of a 'creation' (or 'created thing') is meant - cf. Strabo, Geography, Book 16. 1 [ἧς ἐστι κτίσμα ἡ Βαβυλών] where what is described is a construct, a creation - a work constructed by or on behalf of someone. Here, what is described are the creations of theos.

In respect of 'artisements', see section 10.

the perceiver. ὁ ἔννους.

Eros as responsible for death. τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα. The consensus is, and has been, that ἔρωτα here signifies 'carnal desire' - or something similar - so that it is assumed that what is meant is some sort of ascetic (or Gnostic or puritanical) statement about how sexual desire should be avoided or at the very least controlled. However, this seems rather at variance with the foregoing - regarding propagating and spawning - which inclines me to suggest that what is meant here is 'eros', not necessarily personified as the classical deity (ἡδ᾽ Ἔρος ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ᾽ ἀνθρώπων δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν), although the comparison is interesting, but rather as an elemental or archetypal principle, akin to νοῦς and λόγος. Consider, for example, the following from *Daphnis and Chloe,* written by Longus around the same time as the Corpus Hermeticum: πάντως γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἔρωτα ἔφυγεν ἢ φεύξεται μέχρις ἂν κάλλος ᾖ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ βλέπωσιν [Book 1, Proem, 4 - "no one can avoid or has ever been able to avoid Eros, while there is beauty and eyes which perceive"]. In modern terms, few - poetically, metaphorically, none - have avoided or could avoid, at some time in their life, the unconscious power of the anima/animus.

Eros - as some-thing similar to an archetypal principle, applicable to or of (existing in/part of) "all beings/creations/things" - might also go some way toward explaining the καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα that follows in the text (for example in the Turnebus MS) for which various emendations have been proposed,

including omitting it altogether.

19.

foreknowing, through wyrd.....coagulations. The foreknowing of theos, which enabled theos through wyrd and the cosmic structure to 'found the generations'. The coagulations, the copulation, of beings (created things).

self-knowledge. ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν. A pedantic aside: here, as often elsewhere, I have gone against convention (grammatical and otherwise) by, where possible, choosing neutral personal pronouns, thus avoiding sentences such as "And he who has self-knowledge..." This sometimes results in using third person plural pronouns - such as 'their' and 'they' - as if they were personal pronouns, or using constructs such as "the one of self-knowledge" or "whoever has self-knowledge". In addition, it should be noted that the grammatical categorization of a word (male, female, gender neutral) is only a grammatical categorization and does not always reflect the nature of the being that that word denotes or refers to.

a particular benefit. τὸ περιούσιον ἀγαθόν. Literally, 'the particular benefit' [an alternative, possibly better, translation would be 'the esoteric benefit']. What the text refers to is not some abstract 'good' but rather what is good for, what benefits, the person. Thus, self-knowledge can lead to a particular, a specific, benefit.

perceptively. αἰσθητῶς - cf. Strabo, *Geography*, Book 3, chapter 5.1, a description of a high tide; of the sea, due to the moon, begin to perceptively/visibly both rise and go far onto the shore - ἄρχεσθαι διοιδεῖν τὴν θάλατταν καὶ ἐπιβαίνειν τῆς γῆς αἰσθητῶς μέχρι μεσουρανήσεως.

20.

to discover things. That is, discover/apprehend for yourself, to reveal (dis-cover) the nature of things, and thus fully understand them; qv. section 3 ('apprehend the physis of beings') and section 6 ('then discover phaos and become familiar with it') and section 7 ('such I observed and discovered because of those words of Pœmandres').

why death is expected for those who are in death. διὰ τί ἄξιοί εἰσι τοῦ θανάτου οἱ ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ ὄντες. Somewhat obscure, given the phrase 'in death' and given that what follows - "because originally..." - does not really offer an explanation of it.

I take the meaning of ἀξιόω here to be 'expect' rather than 'worthy' given (i) what the English phrase 'they are worthy of death' (or 'they deserve death') implies, an implication - a moralizing attitude - that is not justified by either the immediate context or the rest of the text, and (ii) usages such as (a) νῦν παρ᾽

ὑμῶν τὸ αὐτὸ ἀξιοῦμεν κομίζεσθαι ['we now expect to receive the same from you'; Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War,* Book 1, chapter 43] and (b) ὥστε οὐκ οἴκτου οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἄξιοί εἰσιν, ἀλλὰ τιμωρίας ['they are expected to be punished not pitied', Hyperides, *Orations Against Philippides*, 2.12]

Nourishes. ἀρδεύεται here is obviously metaphorical, as it literally means "is irrigated/watered" as in Diodorus Siculus when he describes India - τὰ πολλὰ δὲ τῆς χώρας ἀρδεύεται καὶ διὰ τοῦτο διττοὺς ἔχει τοὺς κατ᾽ ἔτος καρπούς ['much of the land is irrigated which is why there are two yields a year'; *Bibliotheca Historica*, Book 2, 35.3]

21.

progress within themselves. εἰς αὐτὸν χωρεῖ. Literally, 'progress to (or proceed/advance toward) him', with the usual assumption being that it is theos that is meant (hence, 'proceed toward theos'), with the alternative translation, of 'progress to themselves', ignored. However, given the immediate context - of a self-discovery - and given examples such as Mark 7.15 (εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτὸν, entering *into* him) and given that (insofar as I understand it) the tractate concerns (i) self-knowing, (ii) a 'mysterium' that is esoteric, and (iii) a desire to know and to understand 'the physis of beings', rather than a religious 'progressing toward god' à la Thomas à Kempis, then I am inclined to favour the somewhat radical translation of 'within themselves'.

the father of all beings. ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων. The word 'all' by itself does not really capture the sense of ὅλων here, which is 'all beings'. The phrase ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων occurs in many other writings, some of which are Christian. For instance in the Τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰουστίνουν πρὸς Τρύφωνα Ἰουδαῖον Διάλογος [The Dialogue of Justinus with Trypho, a Jew] where it is said in the context of Christ being crucified, dying, and then being raised again by 'the father of all' for the benefit of all human beings - τὸν ἑαυτοῦ Χριστὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐκ παντὸς γένους ἀνθρώπων ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων τὰς πάντων κατάρας ἀναδέξασθαι ἐβουλήθη (xcv, 2).

However, interestingly and relevant here, the phrase also occurs in the polemic by Irenaeus against the 'heresy of gnosticism' - the *Adversus Haereses* [ἔλεγχος και ἀνατροπή της ψευδωνύμου γνώσεω] - written not long before the Pœmandres tractate:

> μεταδοῦναί σοι θέλω τῆς ἐμῆς χάριτος ἐπειδὴ ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων τὸν ἄγγελόν σου διαπαντὸς βλέπει πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ὁ δὲ τόπος τοῦ μεγέθους ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστι δι' ἡμᾶς ἐγκαταστῆσαι (Book I, Chapter 13, 3)
>
> I desire to pass on to you my Charis because the father of all beings has observed that your angel is constantly before him

These are the words Irenaeus ascribes to a person called Marcus, 'the heretic'; words used by this person skilled in the trickery of sorcery (μαγικῆς κυβείας ἐμπειρότατον) to, apparently, entice men and wealthy women to be his followers. Irenaeus then goes on, in a passage also quoted by Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (4.11.5), to describe some of the rites - the 'disgusting initiation into the mysteries' - of these people, and which rites include a 'mystical marriage' (πνευματικὸν γάμον) as well as a doxology to 'the father and the mother', εἰς ὄνομα ἀγνώστου πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων εἰς ἀλήθειαν μητέρα τῶν πάντων, and which doxology, with its contrast between ὅλων (ascribed to the father) and πάντων (ascribed to the mother) may go some way toward explaining the meaning of ὅλων as used here, in the Pœmandres tractate, given that μητέρα πάντων - as Γαία, Earth Mother - is the subject of, among other things, one of the Homeric hymns, Εἰς Γῆν Μητέρα Πάντων, where She is described as πρέσβιστος, the elder among beings, and the mother of the gods, θεῶν μήτηρ.

Thus, πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων as the father of all beings, and μητέρα τῶν πάντων as the mother of being, of all Life, both mortal and immortal.

22.

respectful deeds. ὁσίοις. A difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as religious, pious, holy, devout, blessed, sinless, saintly, humble - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism; meanings which, in my view, are not or may not be relevant here, and whose use would distort one's understanding of the text.

The correct meaning is someone who, aware of or sensitive to the difference between the numinous and un-numinous [regarding 'numinous', see the note on ἅγιος in section 5], seeks to avoid, in their behaviour, what might cause them to hubriatically 'overstep the limits' and thus unbalance them, so taking them away from that natural balance and that respect for the numinous, which they personally, by their (or a particular) way of living (personal, religious, spiritual, mystical, or otherwise) seek or desire to cultivate, or which (and importantly) is a natural part of their admirable (and often admired) character. For example:

> ἐκεῖνός γε μὴν ὑμνῶν οὔποτ᾽ ἔληγεν ὡς τοὺς θεοὺς οἴοιτο οὐδὲν ἧττον ὁσίοις ἔργοις ἢ ἁγνοῖς ἱεροῖς ἥδεσθαι ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ὁπότε εὐτυχοίη οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ὑπερεφρόνει ἀλλὰ θεοῖς χάριν ᾔδει καὶ θαρρῶν πλείονα ἔθυεν ἢ ὀκνῶν ηὔχετο εἴθιστο δὲ φοβούμενος μὲν ἱλαροὺς φαίνεσθαι εὐτυχῶν δὲ πρᾷος εἶναι [Xenophon, *Agesilaus*, 11.2]
>
> this person, whom I praise, never ceased to believe that the gods delight in respectful deeds just as much as in consecrated temples,

> and, when blessed with success, he was never prideful but rather gave thanks to the gods. He also made more offerings to them when he was confident than supplications when he felt hesitant, and, in appearance, it was his habit to be cheerful when doubtful and mild-mannered when successful.

For these reasons, I have translated not as one English word, but as the phrase 'respectful deeds'. See also the note on εὐσεβέω below.

honourable. ἀγαθός. The sense is not of being 'good' in some moralistic, sanctimonious, superior, way, but rather of being of noble character, as for example described in the Corpus Aristotelicum:

> τῆς δὲ φρονήσεώς ἐστι τὸ βουλεύσασθαι, τὸ κρῖναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἱρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πᾶσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὁμιλῆσαι ὀρθῶς [*De Virtutibus et Vitiis Libellus* 1250a]
>
> It is part of wisdom to accept advice, to distinguish the honourable, the dishonourable, and all that is, in life, acceptable or to be avoided; to fairly use all resources; to be genuine in company

refined. καθαροῖς. Literally it means 'physically clean', often in the sense of being in a state of ritual purification: qv. the inscription on one of the ancient tablets (totenpasse) found in Thurii - ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά χθονίων βασίλεια (in arrivance, purified from the purified, mistress of the chthonic).

Since the English word 'pure' is unsuitable given its connotations - religious, sanctimonious, political, and otherwise - I have opted for the not altogether satisfactory 'refined'.

compassionate. ἐλεήμοσι. Those who undertake merciful, charitable, humane, deeds; qv. Luke 11.41 (πλὴν τὰ ἐνόντα δότε ἐλεημοσύνην, καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντα καθαρὰ ὑμῖν ἐστιν), Acts 10:2, κτλ.

aware of the numinous. εὐσεβοῦσι. As with ὁσίοις, εὐσεβέω is a difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as reverent, pious - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism. The correct sense is 'aware of the numinous', and thus imbued with that sense of duty, that sense of humility - or rather, an awareness of their human limitations - which makes them appreciate and respect the numinous in whatever form, way, or manner they appreciate, feel, intuit, apprehend, or understand, the numinous, be it in terms of the gods, the god, Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ᾽ Ἐρινύες, God, or whatever. It is this

awareness which inclines a person toward 'respectful deeds' [qv. ὁσίοις, above].

soon acquire knowledge of the whole. εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι. Knowledge of 'the whole picture'; of what has been and is being discussed: perceiveration; the cosmic structure; the nature of humans; the seven viziers; and so on. The sense is not "gnosis of all things", which - in its hubris - is incompatible with the immediately proceeding mention of εὐσεβέω and ὁσίοις.

affectionately gracious toward. There are two ways of interpreting τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς and what follows. (i) As if it is some kind of Christian eulogy by the faithful, with mention of "lovingly propitiating the father" and the "singing of hymns" to him; and (ii) in a rather more religiously neutral way with phrases such as ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς and words such as ὑμνεῦσιν suggesting the more Hellenic "affectionately gracious" and "celebrating in song". I have chosen the latter, as it is, in my view, more in harmony with the rest of the text.

the influencing impressions. αἰσθήσεις. What is meant here is not simply 'the [bodily] senses' nor what is perceptible to or perceived by the senses, but rather those particular impressions, conveyed by the senses, which influence a person in a way which is disliked because they do or they can affect a person in a manner detrimental to their immortality. That is, not all 'feelings' nor all 'sensations' are meant but only those which impresses upon [cf. Circero, *Academica*, 2.6, impressum effictumque] a person in a certain way and thus affect that person also in a certain way, as 'impressionable feelings' do:

> αὐτὸς δὲ διὰ ποιημάτων φιλοσοφεῖ, καθάπερ Ἡσίοδός τε καὶ Ξενοφάνης καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς κριτήριον δὲ τὸν λόγον εἶπε: τάς τε αἰσθήσεις μὴ ἀκριβεῖς ὑπάρχειν φησὶ γοῦν [Diogenes Laertius, Parmenides, 9.3]
>
> he himself, through the form of verse, presented his knowledge, as did Hesiod, Xenophanes and Empedocles, stating that it was a way of judging what was reasonable since impressionable feelings were not an accurate enough starting point

This is the type of 'impression' - the type of influence - meant by some alchemical texts, for example, in the *Compound of Alchymy*, by Ripley, contained in the Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum ['the Body of the Spryte taketh impression' (ix. xi)] and also, some centuries later, by Hume in his *Treatise on Human Nature* ['those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name impressions' (I. i. 12)]. Cf. also Aristotle, Poetics 1451a - τοῦ δὲ μήκους ὅρος ὁ μὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀγῶνας καὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν οὐ τῆς τέχνης ἐστίν - where what is meant is the 'impression' made upon an audience, which thus influences them.

the bad. The usual translation of κακός here, as often elsewhere, is 'evil'.

However, I regard such a translation as unhelpful, given that the English word 'evil' is (1) now often interpreted and understood in a moralistic, preconceived, way according to some theological dogma/criteria and/or according to some political/social doctrine, and (2) that it does not denote what the classical and the Hellenic term κακός does.

Classically understood κακός is what is bad in the sense of some-thing rotten or unhealthy, or – the opposite of κάλος – what is displeasing to see. κακός is also what is unlucky, a misfortune, and/or injurious, as for example in The Agamemnon

> τὸ μὲν γυναῖκα πρῶτον ἄρσενος δίχα
> ἦσθαι δόμοις ἔρημον ἔκπαγλον κακόν (vv. 862-3)
>
> Primarily, for a lady to be separate from her mate -
> To remain unprotected by family – is a harsh misfortune

When applied to a person, the sense is of a 'rotten' person; someone with bad, harmful, physis; a bad - dishonourable, weak, cowardly - personal character; someone whose nature, for examples, inclines them toward doing harm and doing what is generally considered to be wrong.

This sense is still appropriate to Hellenic usage. For example, in respect of Romans 12.17 with its contrast of κακός and κάλος:

> μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες προνοούμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων
>
> Do not render what is bad with what is bad; rather, show concern for what all humans see is good

Similarly with the synonym σαπρός, as for example in Luke 6.43-5:

> Οὐ γὰρ ἐστιν δένδρον καλὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν σαπρόν, οὐδὲ πάλιν δένδρον σαπρὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλόν, ἕκαστον γὰρ δένδρον ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου καρποῦ γινώσκεται· ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ προφέρει τὸ πονηρόν· ἐκ γὰρ περισσεύματος καρδίας λαλεῖ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ
>
> For no healthy tree brings forth rotten fruit just as a rotten tree cannot bring forth healthy fruit. For each tree is judged by its fruit. A good person from the store of good in their heart brings forth what is good, and a bad person from their bad store brings forth what is bad; for it is because of an overflowing heart that the mouth speaks.

23.
hubriatic. ἀσεβέσι; someone lacking in or who is arrogantly disdainful of σέβομαι, of what is regarded as honourable, revered, respected. Someone who is thus 'hubriatic'. It is the opposite of εὐσεβέω, that is, the opposite of someone who is aware of and respectful of the numinous.

the avenging daemon. τῷ τιμωρῷ δαίμον.

Τιμωρῷ is an epithet of the god Mars, mentioned by Cassius Dio Cocceianus in his *Historiae Romanae* when he recounts how Caligula, celebrating the murder of someone, sent three daggers to the temple of Mars the Avenger, in Rome, as offerings to the god - ξιφίδια τρία τῷ Ἄρει τῷ Τιμωρῷ ἐς [Book 59, chapter 22 v.7].

Correctly understood, a δαίμων (daemon) is neither a 'demon' nor one of the pantheon of major Greek gods - θεοί - but rather a lesser type of divinity who might be assigned by those gods to bring good fortune or misfortune to human beings and/or to watch over certain human beings and especially particular numinous (sacred) places.

which tests them. καὶ τοῦτον βασανίζει. The sense here is rather obscure, with some proposed emendations (for example, οὕτως, and τοῦτο for τοῦτον). I take the sense here of βασανίζω to be 'tested', as in being 'put to the test'; a sense in accord with what precedes and with what follows.

24.

Anados. ἄνοδος. A transliteration, as the word has specific meanings in ancient Greek 'mystery cults' and in Hellenic 'mysticism', one of which meanings is the ascent, or progress, or journey, of the initiate/individual toward their goal, however that goal/ascent/progress/journey is described and/or understood, and/or represented (symbolically, mythologically, or otherwise). Quite often, the journey - the 'way up' - is described as the one between the living and the dead (the next life) or as one from the chthonic (the underworld) to our mortal world; which journey sometimes involves a symbolic/mythological death and then a rebirth.

the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed. ἐν τῇ ἀναλύσει τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ὑλικοῦ παραδίδως αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα εἰς ἀλλοίωσιν. Literally, 'in the dissolution of the material body it hands over that body to alteration'.

ethos. ἦθος. Here, ethos in the personal sense; the 'spirit' - the personality - of an individual: their traits, character, disposition, nature, temperament.

25.

in the first realm. The sphere of the Moon, the first of the seven planetary/alchemical/astrological spheres, realms, or emanations - the ἑβδομάς; hebdomad, septenary system - that, in respect of the journey (ἄνοδος) of the mortal toward immortality, form the basis of, are emanations of, the harmonious cosmic structure (qv. sections 9 and 14). On this journey, the mortal passes through each realm - sphere - in turn.

which grows and which fades. Cf. Sextus Empiricus - ταύτην δὲ ἤτοι αὐξητικὴν ἢ μειωτικήν [Adversus Mathematicos, IX, 393]

arrogance of command. Reading ὑπερηφανίαν not προφανίαν.

26.

ogdoadic physis. ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν. An interesting and important term, often overlooked and often misinterpreted. What is meant is not a realm - ζώνῃ - or sphere, similar to but 'beyond' the seven realms, but rather 'of what' the mortal has become, is reborn as, at the end of the journey: partaking in and being of 'the ogdoadic physis', and thus sharing the being/existence of those who have, or who have attained, that particular type of being/existence/physis. The existence, that is, of an immortal beyond the seven emanations.

with the others there, celebrates the father in song. ὑμνεῖ σὺν τοῖς οὖσι τὸν πατέρα. Again - qv. section 22 - not 'hymns' in the Christian sense but rather celebrating in song/verse/chant; celebrating the father of this mortal, the parent of all mortals, and ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, the 'grandfather' of all beings (qv. section 21).

force. δύναμις. Cf. section 7. Those forces, those particular powers - or, more precisely, that type (or those types) of being(s) or existence - that are not only beyond the septenary system but beyond the ogdoadic physis of those mortals who have, because of their journey (ἄνοδος) through the septenary system, achieved immortality.

It is therefore easy to understand why some considered there were, or represented their understanding/insight by, 'nine' (seven plus two) fundamental cosmic emanations, or by nine realms or spheres [qv. the quote from Cicero in section 17] - the seven of the hebdomad, plus the one of the 'ogdoadic physis' mentioned here, plus the one (also mentioned here) of what is beyond even this 'ogdoadic physis'. However, as this text describes, there are seven realms or spheres - a seven-fold path to immortality, accessible to living mortals - and then two types of existence (not spheres) beyond these, accessible only after the mortals has journeyed along that path and then, having 'offered up' certain things along the way (their mortal ethos), 'handed over their body to its death'. Ontologically, therefore, the seven might somewhat simplistically be described as partaking of what is 'causal' (of what is mortal) and the two types of

existence beyond the seven as partaking of - as being - 'acausal' (of what is immortal). Thus, Pœmandres goes on to say, the former mortal - now immortal - moves on (from this first type of 'acausal existence') to become these forces (beyond the ogdoadic physis) to thus finally 'unite with theos': αὐτοὶ εἰς δυνάμεις ἐαυ τοὺς παραδιδόασι καὶ δυνάμεις γενόμενοι ἐν θεῷ γίνονται.

26.

become united with theos. ἐν θεῷ γίνονται. Literally, '[they] become in theos', or '[they] enter into theos', although given what follows - θεωθῆναι - what is meant is 'become of/be united with theos', and thus 'become-of' what is no longer mortal but rather both immortal and 'of theos'.

become of theos. θεωθῆναι. This does not mean 'made divine/god', or 'achieve divinity' or 'become god/a god', or deification, but rather, having become immortal, to be (re)united with theos and thus, by such a 'becoming', re-present (become-of) in that new (acausal) existence the numinosity of theos, and which return and re-presentation is the real aim of our mortal lives and the function of λόγος, and of the λόγοι (such as pneumal logos and the phaomal logos). That is, as explained in some of the rather neglected works of Maximus of Constantinople [qv. Migne Patrologiae Graeca, 90 and 91], Θεώσις in the sense of reunited with theos - ultimately because of ἀγάπη - without actually being or becoming 'a divinity' or 'God':

> τῆς ἐπὶ τῷ θεωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μυστικῆς ἐνεργείας λήψεται πέρας κατὰ πάντα τρόπον χωρὶς μόνης δηλονότι τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος. *Quæstiones ad Thalassium de Scriptura Sacra*, XXII [Patrologiae Graeca, 90, c.0318]
>
> the end of the opus mysterium of human beings becoming of Theos can be in all ways except one, namely that of having the identity of His Essence

the noble goal. τὸ ἀγαθὸν τέλος. This might well be taken as an axiom of the 'hermetic' weltanschauung presented in this tractate. In respect of ἀγαθός as honourable/noble, see the note in section 22.

those who seek to acquire knowledge. Given the use here of the word γνῶσις, the sense could be interpreted, and has by others been interpreted, to mean 'those who seek to acquire/attain gnosis'.

other mortals can - through theos - escape. I take the sense of σώζω here be to 'escape', for the English word 'saved' now imposes, after nearly two thousand years of scriptural exegesis and preaching, various religious preconceptions on the text. Also, the usual translation of 'saved by god' is somewhat at variance with the hermetic/gnostic weltanschauung which suggests a progression -

ἄνοδος - through the realms/spheres in order to attain immortality.

For the 'escape' is from the mortal to the immortal, and therefore to be 'saved', because of theos, so that (qv. section 21) they can "progress to return to Life"

27.

joined with those forces. The meaning here is somewhat obscure, although it possibly signifies that Pœmandres leaves the mortal realm and rejoins - returns to - his existence, beyond the hebdomad, where those forces/powers exist.

an insight of great importance. μεγίστην θέαν. An important 'insight into' the workings of the cosmos, immortality, and the nature of mortals, rather than 'a vision' or a 'revelation'.

awareness of the numinous. See the note on 'aware of the numinous'/εὐσεβέω in section 22.

earth-bound mortals. ἄνδρες γηγενεῖς. The literal meaning is 'earth-born mortals', which is rather obscure here, although what is meant is probably not the somewhat pejorative 'primordial/primitive' type [qv. ἔστι ἐν τῇ ἀκροπόλι ταύτῃ Ἐρεχθέος τοῦ γηγενέος λεγομένου εἶναι νηός, Herodotus, 8.55; and ἄλλοι δὲ γηγενεῖς καὶ χαλκάσπιδας, Strabo, 10.3] nor even the 'earthy/rural' type [qv. μὴ μισήσῃς ἐπίπονον ἐργασίαν καὶ γεωργίαν ὑπὸ Ὑψίστου ἐκτισμένην, LXX, Sirach 7.15] but rather the contrast, mentioned in section 15, between those 'deathful of body' and the 'deathlessness of the inner mortal'; with a similar contrast occurring in Plato [οὐδὲν γὰρ γηγενὲς Ὀλυμπίων ἐντιμότερον ἀλλ᾽ ὁ περὶ ψυχῆς ἄλλως δοξάζων ἀγνοεῖ ὡς θαυμαστοῦ τούτου κτήματος ἀμελεῖ, Laws 727e]. Hence my suggestion of 'earth-bound', which is apposite considering what follows - οἱ μέθῃ καὶ ὕπνῳ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδε δωκότες.

sleepfulness. To translate ὕπνος here as simply 'sleep' is not particularly helpful to the reader, as what seems to be implied is not normal everyday 'sleep' - a necessity for all humans - since such normal healthy sleep is a strange companion for 'intoxicating liquor'. Regarding ὕπνος, Jebb in his commentary on *Antigone* in respect of ὕπνος ὁ παντογήρως (v.606) mentioned that "sleep, the renewer of vigour, could not be described as 'bringing old age to all'. Nor can the epithet be explained as 'enfeebling all', in the sense of 'subduing them'; nor, again, as 'attending on all, even to old age'," which led him to write that παντογήρως was probably corrupt and to suggest, as some others had done, an emendation.

The fact that sleep personified, as Hypnos/Somnus, is the brother of Death [qv. ἔνθ᾽ Ὕπνῳ ξύμβλητο κασιγνήτῳ Θανάτοιο, Iliad, 14.231] is also in favour of normal, healthy, sleep not being meant, as does what follows - θελγόμενοι ὕπνῳ ἀλόγῳ. Thus a possible alternative would be to interpret ὕπνος here somewhat metaphorically, either as a 'state of mind' (such as 'sleepwalking through life')

or as something akin to soporation (an underused English word, from the Latin) with the meaning here of 'an inclination or a tendency to sleep excessively or unnecessarily; to be inactive, drowsy, sleepful; disconnected from reality'. Hence my tentative interpretation - 'sleepfulness'.

unknowing of theos. ἀγνωσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ. Unknowing is a more suitable English word - given its meaning, usage (past and present) and given the context - than 'ignorance'

stop your drunkenness. παύσασθε δὲ κραιπαλῶντες. Literally, 'cease to be intoxicated'. It is interesting to compare this preaching to what Plutarch wrote about Demosthenes:

> ὀδυρομένου δὲ τοῦ Δημοσθένους πρὸς αὐτόν ὅτι πάντων φιλοπονώτατος ὢν τῶν λεγόντων καὶ μικροῦ δέων καταναλωκέναι τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀκμὴν εἰς τοῦτο χάριν οὐκ ἔχει πρὸς τὸν δῆμον, ἀλλὰ κραιπαλῶντες ἄνθρωποι ναῦται καὶ ἀμαθεῖς ἀκούονται καὶ κατέχουσι τὸ βῆμα, παρορᾶται δ᾽ αὐτός [Demosthenes, 7.1]
>
> To him, Demosthenes complained that although he was an industrious orator and had expended much bodily vigour in pursuing that duty, he was not favoured by the people who ignored him but listened to those who were intoxicated, the ignorant, and sailors, when they and their like held the floor.

28.

change your ways. μετανοήσατε. Not 'repent', which imposes a particular religious interpretation upon the text.

have kinship with the unknowing ones. συγκοινωνήσαντες τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ. Kinship in the sense of being 'kindred spirits', or 'fellow travellers'.

dark phaos. σκοτεινοῦ φωτός. An interesting phrase, lost in translation when φως is translated as 'light'. See the note on phaos in section 4.

29.

threw themselves down at my feet. ἑαυτοὺς πρὸ ποδῶν μου ῥίψαντε. A literal translation, although, given what follows, it seems unlikely that this is a metaphorical expression of their eagerness to learn. Indeed, this whole section seems rather at variance with the rest of the text - especially considering the following καθοδηγὸς ἐγενόμην τοῦ γένους - although perhaps 'the guide', having only just been informed of certain esoteric matters by Pœmandres, is here in this section somewhat obliquely revealing that he himself has yet (qv. section 25) to offer up "that eagerness which deceives; the arrogance of command; profane insolence."

became a guide to those of my kind. That is, not 'a guide to my race/mankind' but a guide to those who, seeking immortality, desire to undertake the journey through the seven spheres and thus are akin to - of the same type as - the guide.

informing them of the logoi. τοὺς λόγους διδάσκων. The logoi [plural of logos] are - qv. the note on θεωθῆναι in section 26 - the various apparent forms (or emanations) of the logos, and include the pneumal logos, the phaomal logos, and the logos kyrios, previously mentioned in the text. They are often considered to be how the logos is sometimes manifest to us, as mortals who are yet to begin or are yet to progress far along the septenary path toward immortality. Furthermore, those who are on the journey - following the way to theos - are also logoi.

logoi of sapientia. σοφίας λόγους. Something more than just 'words of [the] wisdom' is meant, especially as the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context, in this case of 'the opus mysterium'. The use here, in my translation, of the terms *logoi* and *sapientia* is intended - as with transliterations such as phaos - to cause the reader to pause and perhaps engender in them a certain curiosity as to what the terms may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply, and to thus (and hopefully) convey something about the original text.

celestial elixir. ἀμβροσίου ὕδατος. Literally, 'ambrosial water'; the food/drink that, in mythology, confers and maintains the immortality of the gods and chosen mortals.

30.

temperance of [the] psyche. τῆς ψυχῆς νῆψις. Again transliterating ψυχῆς, since the English word 'soul' imposes particular - religious/philosophical, and/or modern - meanings on the text, whereas it may well be used here in its classical/Hellenic sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; that is, as referring to that 'thing' (principle, or cause) which animates mortal beings making them 'alive', and which principle or cause was also personified as Psyche.

genuine insight. ἀληθινὴ ὅρασις. Cf. μεγίστην θέαν in section 27.

expression of the logos. It not clear how or in what form this manifestation of the logos occurs, although the context - of silence - might suggest that 'utterance' or 'speech' is not meant.

the logos of authority. τῆς αὐθεντίας λόγου. A similar expression occurs in section 3 also in reference to Pœmandres - τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς, the perceiveration of authority.

this revealing. I take the sense of ἀληθείας here to be not some abstract

(undefined, probably contentious and thus possibly undefinable) 'truth' but rather as a revealing of what is 'genuine' as distinct from what is mere 'appearance'. Here, literally, '*the* revealing' - of the nature of mortals, of the way to immortality, of logos and of theos.

31.

Agios o theos, father of all beings. ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων. For πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, see the note in section 22.

I have given, as an intimation, a transliteration of the first part, as these are doxologies, similar to the Kyrie eleison [Κύριε ἐλέησον], and much (if not all) of their numinous/sacred/mystical/esoteric quality and meaning are lost when they are translated into plain - or into archaic, KJV type - English. Although they are best read/recited in the original Greek, the Latin preserves much of the numinosity of these and other such doxologies. The Latin of the nine doxologies given here is:

> Sanctus deus pater universorum.
> Sanctus deus, cuius consilium ad finem deducitur a propriis potentiis.
> Sanctus deus, qui cognosci vult et cognoscitur a suis.
> Sanctus es, qui verbo constituisti entia omnia.
> Sanctus es, cuius universa natura imago nata est.
> Sanctus es, quem natura non formavit.
> Sanctus es, qui omni potentia es fortior.
> Sanctus es, qui omni excellentia es maior.
> Sanctus es, qui omnes superas laudes.

The Greek text is:

> ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων.
> ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς, οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων.
> ἅγιος ὁ θεός, ὃς γνωσθῆναι βούλεται καὶ γινώσκεται τοῖς ἰδίοις.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ λόγῳ συστησάμενος τὰ ὄντα.
> ἅγιος εἶ, οὗ πᾶσα φύσις εἰκὼν ἔφυ.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὃν ἡ φύσις οὐκ ἐμόρφωσεν.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ πάσης δυνάμεως ἰσχυρότερος.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ πάσης ὑπεροχῆς μείζων.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ κρείττων τῶν ἐπαίνων.

ἅγιος ὁ approximates to 'Numinous is' [theos] - qv. the note on ἅγιος in section 5 - and ἅγιος εἶ to 'Numinous are' [you].

As to why there are nine doxologies, it may be (and probably is) just a coincidence, or it may reflect the 7+2 structure of the 7 causal aspects (the hebdomad) and the 2 'acausal' modes of being beyond them (qv. the note on δύναμις in section 26).

his own arts. I take the sense of δυνάμεων here to be not 'powers', forces (or something similar) but 'arts'; that is, those abilities, qualities, skills, and strengths - of the 'artisan-creator' - which are inherent in theos and express the very nature of theos. Abilities, qualities, skills, and strengths, which an artisan - with assistance and help and instruction from theos, the chief artisan - uses, for example, to 'fashion seven viziers' and the 'fine artisements of physis'. See sections 9-13 and the notes thereon.

whose disposition is to be recognized. γνωσθῆναι here with γινώσκεται is not exactly the straightforward '[who] wills/desires to be known' but rather the more subtle '[whose] disposition is to be recognized', and (i) disposition/inclination as an expression of the nature, the very being, of theos, (ii) to be recognized in the sense of to be perceived for who and what theos is, in essence, in very being. Those who so recognize theos - who thus understand and 'appreciate' theos and are cognizant of the type of Being theos is - are those who partake in some way, or who re-present or emanate, or who 'imitate' [qv. Thomas à Kempis, The Imitation of Christ] the nature of that Being; and which Being is therefore 'recognized/understood by those who are of his [type of] being,' although the Greek literally means "is recognized by his own".

Agios es. For ἅγιος εἶ. Combining the Latin with the Greek, for readability and expressiveness.

form all being. In both senses of the term 'form' - constitute, and form being into beings and which beings are or can be re-united with Being (theos) by logos.

you who engender all physis as eikon. The meaning and significance of this are often overlooked and often lost in translation. I have transliterated εἰκὼν as here it does not only mean what the English words 'image' or 'likeness' suggest or imply, but rather it is similar to what Maximus of Constantinople in his *Mystagogia* [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence.

According to the hermetic weltanschauung, as outlined by Pœmandres here, all physis - the being, nature, character, of beings - their essence beyond the form/appearence their being is or assumes or is perceived as - re-presents (manifests, is an eikon of) theos. That is, the physis of beings can be considered not only as an emanation of theos but as re-presenting his Being, his essence. To recognize this, to recognize theos, to be in communion with theos, to return to theos, and thus become immortal, there is the way up (anados) through the

seven spheres:

> Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait. [Section 25]

you whom the Physis did not morph. Given the construction - ὃν ἡ φύσις - I have capitalized Physis here (see sections 14 and 17]. By 'morph' is meant what the Greek term (ἐμόρφωσεν) implies, which is 'shape or transform' into some-thing-else, to give some-thing the 'semblance' of theos . That is, theos was, is, and remains, theos; there is no-thing resembling theos.

you who are mightier than all artifice. The artifice - the works, expedients, skill, manifestations, artisements, products, machinations, ingenuity, the 'domination', and the force - of others.

It is interesting to compare this might, the strength and power of theos, with what Epictetus writes about human strength in his *Discourses*:

> οὔτε τύραννος κωλύσει με θέλοντα οὔτε δεσπότης οὔτε οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν ἕνα οὔθ᾽ ὁ ἰσχυρότερος τὸν ἀσθενέστερον: τοῦτο γὰρ ἀκώλυτον δέδοται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἑκάστῳ [4.5]
>
> neither a tyrannos nor some Lord shall negate my intent; nor some crowd although I be just one; nor someone stronger although I be weaker, since such unhindrance is a gift, to everyone, from theos

wordful. The expressive term 'wordful' is more suitable here than 'speech', and also contrasts well with 'ineffable' and 'inexpressible'.

32.

the knowledge. For τῆς γνώσεως, although 'acquiring the knowledge' and 'the gnosis' are alternatives, so that with the latter it reads "I ask of you to grant that I am not foiled in the gnosis germane to our essence", with the phrase 'our essence' referring to the essence - οὐσία - of both mortals and theos.

favour. χάρις. A gift, favour, or kindness, here from theos [χάρις θεοῦ] and which type of gift is also mentioned in the New Testament (for example, Luke, 2.40). See also the quotation from Irenaeus in the note on *the father of all beings* in section 21.

the unknowing. In respect of 'unknowing' see the note in section 27.

who are your children. In respect of υἱὸς as the gender neutral 'child', rather than 'son', see the note on υἱὸς θεοῦ in section 6, and also the note on gender neutrality under ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in section 19.

share in [your] numinosity. For συναγιάζειν.

Ιερός Λόγος

An Esoteric Mythos

Tractate III

A Pagan And Esoteric Mythos

While the title - Ιερός Λόγος - of the third tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum is generally translated as either "A Sacred Discourse" or "A Holy Sermon", it would perhaps be more accurate to translate as *An Esoteric Mythos* given (i) that it describes a numinous theogony of the kind recounted to initiates of the mystery traditions of ancient Greece, and thus recounts a mythos that pre-dates the Biblical story of Genesis, as given in the Septuagint (LXX), by centuries, and (ii) that ἱερός λόγος/ἱεροί λόγοι (an esoteric mythos/esoteric mythoi) were phrases often used to describe such mystery traditions, both Greek and Greco-Egyptian, as, for example, by Herodotus {1}.

For it is possible that the often-stated belief of the tractate being influenced by the story recounted in LXX is incorrect, and that whatever similarities there are between the text of the tractate and Greek text of the Biblical story of Genesis might be due either to the scribe of what was a previously esoteric aural tradition being familiar with LXX or some parts of it and borrowing a particular word or words to try and express an aspect of that paganus tradition (an opinion held by the Christian Byzantine historian Mikhael Psellus, d. 1078 CE), or to the Biblical story of creation itself being influenced by a more ancient Greek mythos or mythoi, just as it was influenced by similar, more ancient, mythoi from Sumeria and elsewhere. In addition, the overt polytheism of the tractate, and Greek concepts such as φύσις (physis) and Πνεῦμα (pneuma) {2}, are at odds with such influence and with that Biblical story.

Furthermore, far from it being (again, as has often been previously believed) a very corrupt, or overwritten text, the Ιερός Λόγος most probably reasonably represents, like the Pymander tractate, a pagan metaphysical weltanschauung germane to the period of its composition and one which is based upon or recounts an earlier, and most probably aural, tradition. Furthermore, as Wildberg has suggested, the text might simply incorporate some marginalia {3}.

Such an esoteric mythos, as recorded in the Ιερός Λόγος hermetic tractate, had - like the Biblical Genesis story - antecedents. Such as

> οἳ Γῆς ἐξεγένοντο καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος
>
> those who came-into-being from Gaia and the starry heavens {4}

from the theogony of Hesiod (106) - written c. 700 BCE - of which there is a remarkably similar expression in funerary inscriptions, from some four centuries later (c. 300 BCE) in Pharsalos, Thessalyon,

> Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστ<ερόεντος>
>
> I am a child of Gaia and the starry heavens

and on a gold funerary tablet (c. 200 BCE) found at Eleutherna, Crete,

> ΓΑΣ ΥΙΟΣ ΕΙΜΙ ΚΑΙ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΥ ΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΟΣ
>
> Γᾶς υἱός ἠμι καὶ �Ωρανῶ ἀστερόεντος {5}

and also in a, purportedly Orphic, religious text (the Derveni papyrus) dating from c. 330 BCE {6} which contains the Hesiodian phrase οἳ Διὸς ἐξεγένοντο [those who came-into-being from Zeus]. Thus, it is part of this ancient esoteric mythos, and/or its antecedents, that may well be echoed in LXX (Genesis, 1:1), written centuries later:

> Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν
>
> In the beginning, Theos produced the heavens and the Earth {7}

and which Biblical text is, interestingly, given by Aquila - qv. the Hexapla {8} - as:

> Ἐν κεφαλαίῳ ἔκτισεν ὁ Θεὸς σὺν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ σὺν τὴν γῆν
>
> As foundation, Theos formed the heavens and the Earth {9}

It is thus my view that the third tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum is a valuable hermetic document, presenting as it does - probably after centuries of aural transmission as befitted ἱεροί λόγοι - an esoteric weltanschauung that pre-dates, and thus is independent of, not only Christianity but also of the myths, stories, and theology, manifest in the Old Testament.

Understood thus, the Ιερός Λόγος tractate is the story of genesis according to an ancient pagan, and esoteric, weltanschauung; a text in all probability older than the other texts in the Corpus Hermeticum; and a text which the author of the Pœmandres tractate might well have been familiar with, as a reading of both texts indicates.

Commentary, Translation, and Text

The references in the commentary here to the *Pœmandres* tractate are to my translation of and commentary on that text for I have retained the transliterations, and some of the English phrases, used and explained there, such as physis, phaos, theos. I have also, as there, occasionally used some particular, or some quite obscure English words - or forms of them - in order to try and elucidate the meaning of the text or to avoid using, in what is a metaphysical text, some commonplace term with various connotations (contemporary or otherwise) that may lead to a misunderstanding of the text. I have endeavoured to explain such obscure words in the commentary. There is thus in this translation, as in my translation of *Pœmandres*, a certain technical - or rather, esoteric - vocabulary.

Purely for readability, I have arranged the translation into (non-poetic) verses rather than long paragraphs. All translations in the commentary and notes are mine.

Notes

{1} (a) ἔστι λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ ἱρὸς λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 48, s3. (b) ἔστι ἱρὸς περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 62, s2. (c) ἔστι δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν ἱρὸς λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 81, s2.

{2} In ἱεροί λόγοι and in many hermetic texts, φύσις suggests something more than what the terms 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denote. That is - qv. the Pœmandres tractate (see footnote 8) - it suggests to "know what is real" and to apprehend the physis of those real things - νοῆσαι τὴν τού των φύσιν; to thus have an understanding of ontology. For physis is a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being.

In respect of pnuema, qv. DeWitt Burton: *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918)

{3} Christian Wildberg: *The Genesis of a Genesis: Corpus Hermeticum, Tractate III*, in Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz: *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (pp.139-166). *Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum*, 155. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2013.

{4} Pedantically, a more accurate translation of ἀστερόεντος would be stelliferous - hence the 'stelliferous heavens' - but 'starry heavens' is far more poetic.

{5} Interestingly, some similar inscriptions - such as another one from Eleutherna - are gender neutral and simply say ΓΥΑΤΗΡΚΑΙΩΡΑΝΩΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΟΣ. That is, 'of Gaia and the starry heavens'.

{6} Bernabé, Alberto, and Francesc Casadesús. *Orfeo y la tradición órfica: Un reencuentro*. Madrid: Akal. 2008.

{7} Although I give here, for Ἐν ἀρχῇ, the conventional 'In the beginning', I am inclined to prefer 'In primacy' (the first thing/principle/origin of; cf. Anaximander, where there is also mention of the heavens and 'the world' or cosmos: πρῶτος τοῦτο τοὔνομα κομίσας τῆς ἀρχῆς λέγει δ' αὐτὴν μήτε ὕδωρ μήτε ἄλλο τι τῶν καλουμένων εἶναι στοιχείων ἀλλ' ἑτέραν τινὰ φύσιν ἄπειρον ἐξ ἧς ἅπαντας γίνεσθαι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς κόσμους. Simplicius, *Physics*, 24:13-21).

An alternative, suggested by the Greek text of Aquila of Genesis 1:1, would be "As foundation, Theos produced..." Furthermore, instead of the 'creavit' of the Latin Vulgate, the older Vetus Latina has 'In principio *fecit* deus caelum et terram.'

{8} Frederick Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quæ Supersunt*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1875.

{9} Literally, "In foundation, Theos built/produced..."

The Latin of Jermone - who, according to certain sources, was acquainted with the text of Aquila - is *in principio creavit Deus caelum et terram*.

Translation

[1] The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis.
The origin of what exists is theos, who is Perceiveration and Physis and Substance:
The sapientia which is a revealing of all beings.
For the numinal is the origin: physis, vigour, incumbency, accomplishment, renewance.

In the Abyss, an unmeasurable darkness, and, by the influence of the numen,
Water and delicate apprehending Pnuema, there, in Kaos.
Then, a numinous phaos arose and, from beneath the sandy ground,
Parsements coagulated from fluidic essence.
And all of the deities <particularize> seedful physis.

[2] With all beings unformed and not yet presenced,
What was lightsome was separated out, upward
And what was burdensome set in fluidic ground
With all defined through Fire, then elevated - and conveyed - by Pneuma.
Thus the heavens became perceivable in seven spheres,
Deities represented in the arrangements of the stars,
With the outer revolving in the æther, and circulating by the Pnuema of theos.

[3] Through their distinguishing influence, each deity did what was assigned to them
So that there came-into-being beasts four-footed and slithering
And those dwelling in water and those that fly,
And harvestable seeds and pastures and all kinds of verdant flowers,
<Seeding within> the semination of rebirth.
Thus can the offspring of mortals apprehend the works of theos, a living witness of physis,
So that the multitude of mortals can husband all that is below the heavens,
Appreciate honour, and propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning.

Thus, every psyche - embodied in flesh - can
By the mirificence of the circumferent deities coursing the heavens
Apprehend the heavens, and honour, and physis presenced, and the works of theos;
Can understand divine influence as wyrdful change
And thus, regarding what is good and what is bad, discover all the arts of honour.

[4] For this is the commencement of their living, of such learning
As is - by circumferent deities coursing - wyrdful, and the discoagulation of it,
For the great earthly artialized memorials they have left
Will, with the passing of the seasons, fade
Just as, for the generations of psyche-bearing flesh and fruitful seeds and artisements,
There will be renewance through incumbency, renewance through the divine
And by the circumferent coursing of Physis.

The divine is all of that mixion: renewance of the cosmic order through Physis
For Physis is presenced in the divine.

°°°

Commentary

1.

The numen of all beings is theos. Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς. The sense of δόξα here, especially given the following mention of θεῖος and φύσις, is of immanence and of transcendent sublimity, encompassing both (i) the interpretation given to the word in LXX and the New Testament, of a divine glory (qv. Exodus 16:10, Matthew 25:31, and Luke 2:9) and thus of what is considered to be - that is, is outwardly manifest as - glorious, or splendid, as in Matthew 4:8, a sense well-expressed in the Latin of Jerome: iterum adsumit eum diabolus in montem excelsum valde et ostendit ei omnia regna mundi et gloriam eorum, and (ii) the classical, more personal sense, of honour, and reputation or repute, the latter as for example referenced by Boethius: Unde non iniuria tragicus exclamat: Ὦ δόξα, δόξα, μυρίοισι δὴ βροτῶν οὐδὲν γεγῶσι βίοτον ὤγκωσας μέγαν (Book III, vi).

Hence I have opted for 'numen', rather than the usual 'splendour' or 'glory' which do not, in my view given their modern connotations and common usage, express the sense of the Greek; with the meaning of 'numen' here being expressed by what follows: "numinal and of numinal physis", where by numinal - in this ἱερός λόγος - is meant divine not in the specific sense of a monotheistic and Biblical (a masculous) God but in the more general sense of pertaining to a deity or deities, male or female, as in a paganus (and not necessarily patriarchal) polytheism.

In this paganus context, the numinous is therefore what is, or what manifests (presences) or can manifest or remind us of (what can reveal) what is regarded or understood as sacred, numinal, sublime, awe-inspiring, beautiful, noble, esoteric, beyond the mundane, and beyond our ability, as mortals, to control. Thus, in terms of ἱεροί λόγοι in general, the numen reminds us of 'the natural order of things' (the physis of theos, of theoi, of Nature and of the heavens), reminds us of our own physis, and thus of our duties and responsibilities as mortals (especially in relation to deities) and thence the need to avoid hubris.

In respect of hubris, Hesiod, in Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι [Works and Days], vv 213-218, wrote:

> σὺ δ᾽ ἄκουε δίκης, μηδ᾽ ὕβριν ὄφελλε:

ὕβρις γάρ τε κακὴ δειλῷ βροτῷ: οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλὸς
215 ῥηιδίως φερέμεν δύναται, βαρύθει δέ θ᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς
ἐγκύρσας ἄτῃσιν: ὁδὸς δ᾽ ἑτέρηφι παρελθεῖν
κρείσσων ἐς τὰ δίκαια: Δίκη δ᾽ ὑπὲρ Ὕβριος ἴσχει
ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα: παθὼν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω

You should listen to [the goddess] Fairness and not oblige Hubris
Since Hubris harms unfortunate mortals while even the more fortunate
Are not equal to carrying that heavy a burden, meeting as they do with Mischief.
The best path to take is the opposite one: that of honour
For, in the end, Fairness is above Hubris
Which is something the young come to learn from adversity.

Notes:

a. δίκη. The goddess of Fairness/Justice/Judgement, and – importantly – of Tradition (Ancestral Custom). In Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι, as in Θεογονία (Theogony), Hesiod is recounting and explaining part of that tradition, one important aspect of which tradition is understanding the relation between the gods and mortals. Given both the antiquity of the text and the context, ‘Fairness’ – as the name of the goddess – is, in my view, more appropriate than the now common appellation ‘Justice’, considering the modern (oft times impersonal) connotations of the word ‘justice’.
b. Mischief. The sense of ἄτῃσιν here is not of ‘delusion’ nor of ‘calamities’, per se, but rather of encountering that which or those whom (such as the goddess of mischief, Ἄτη) can bring mischief or misfortune into the ‘fortunate life’ of a ‘fortunate mortal’, and which encounters are, according to classical tradition, considered as having been instigated by the gods. Hence, of course, why Sophocles [Antigone, 1337-8] wrote ὡς πεπρωμένης οὐκ ἔστι θνητοῖς συμφορᾶς ἀπαλλαγή (mortals cannot be delivered from the misfortunes of their fate).
c. δίκαιος. Honour expresses the sense that is meant: of being fair; capable of doing the decent thing; of dutifully observing ancestral customs. A reasonable alternative for ‘honour’ would thus be ‘decency’, both preferable to words such as ‘just’ and ‘justice’ which are not only too impersonal but have too many inappropriate modern connotations.
d. νήπιος. Literal – ‘young’, ‘uncultured’ (i.e. un-schooled, un-educated in the ways of ancestral custom) – rather than metaphorical (‘foolish’, ignorant).

Theos. θεὸς. As with the Pœmandres tractate, I have opted for a transliteration, for the Biblical 'God' is not what is meant here, given the title of the tractate and the content, while the word 'god' (singular, lower case) now has certain connotations (some of which are theological) not always relevant to ancient Greek deities. In terms of theos, what is most probably meant here - cf. Hesiod's Theogony - is the, or a, prime, first, or primordial deity (such as Οὐρανός) from whence came-into-being the other Greek deities, including Zeus (cf. the use of πρῶτον by Plato in *Timeas,* 69b).

Thus, in respect of this tractate, I translate θεοὶ not as 'gods' but as 'deities' in the hope of providing a more balanced view of this particular ancient paganus text.

Physis. As in my translation of Pœmandres tractate I have given a transliteration to suggest, as I wrote there, "something more than what 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denotes. That is, to know what is real and apprehend the physis of those real things - νοῆσαι τὴν τού των φύσιν; to discern the physis, the true nature, of beings. That is, to have an understanding of ontology; for physis is a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being".

Occasionally I have capitalized physis, when the context merits it, such as when the physis of what we term Nature is meant or implied; or when - as here at the beginning - it is an attribute of theos.

τῶν ὄντων. What is real/what exists (Reality/Existence) - qv. the beginning of the Pœmandres tractate, and my commentary thereon.

νοῦς. *Perceiveration,* not 'mind', qv. Pœmandres 2.

substance. ὕλη, the *materia* of 'things' and living beings - contrasted with οὐσία, essence. qv. Pœmandres 10.

sapientia. σοφία. qv. Pœmandres 29.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. In the sense of vitality and vigorous activity. See my note on ἡ εἱμαρμένη, Pœmandres 15.

incumbency. Often personified as Ἀνάγκης, the primordial goddess of incumbency; that is, of wyrd: of that which is beyond, and the origin of, what we often describe as our Fate as a mortal being. To render ἀνάγκη here somewhat blandly as 'necessity' is to miss both the subtle esotericism of an ἱερός λόγος and what Empedocles wrote:

> ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,
> ἀίδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὅρκοις·
> εὖτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μιήνηι,
> νείκεῖ θ' ὅς κε ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσηι,
> δαίμονες οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο,
> τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
> φυομένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἴδεα θνητῶν
> ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
> αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
> πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς
> ἠελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
> ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
> τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγάς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
> Νείκεϊ μαινομένωι πίσυνος.

There exists an insight by Ananke, an ancient resolution
Of the gods, immutable and sealed by vows,
Regarding when one of the daimons - those whose allotted portion of life is long -
Has their own hands stained from murder
Or who, once having sworn an oath, because of some feud breaks that oath.
For they shall for ten thousand tripled seasons wander away from the beautified,
Begotten during that period in all manner of mortal form
And exchanging during that voyage one vexation for another:

The fierce Ætherials chase them to the Sea,
The Sea spits them out onto dusty ground,
Gaia hurls them to the burning light of the Sun
Who flings them back to those swirling Ætherials.
Moved from one to the other, all detest them.

I am one of those, a vagabond in exile from the gods
Who has to rely on strongful Disagreement.

Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Diels-Kranz, B115

Notes:

νεῖκος (disagreement) is - according to what we can adduce of the philosophy of Empedocles from the fragments of his writings that we possess - a fundamental principle, and one understood in relation to another fundamental principle, Φιλότης, expressive as they both are of the logos (λόγος) by which we can possibly apprehend the workings of the cosmic order (κόσμος). However, the common translations - of 'strife' and 'love' respectively - do not in my view express what Empedocles seems to be trying to convey, which is 'disagreement' and 'fellowship' (a communal or kindred working-together in pursuit of a common interest or goal). For while disagreement sometimes disrupts fellowship, it is often necessary as the genesis of productive change.

Thus, just as Odysseus had to rely on the support of Athena, who disagreed with how Poseidon treated Odysseus, so does the 'vagabond in exile from the deities/the gods' have to rely on disagreements among the immortals to end their own exile.

Abyss. ἄβυσσος.

A delicate apprehending pneuma. πνεῦμα λεπτὸν νοερόν. In respect of νοερός, the sense here is not 'intelligent'/'intelligence' - as in "quickness or superiority of understanding, sagacity", etcetera - but rather of self-awareness; that is, of possessing a faculty to perceive, comprehend, and to rationally understand the external world. Which is why I have opted for 'apprehending'.

influence. δύναμις. Not here 'force' or 'power' per se but rather the influence arising from, inherent in, the numen by virtue of the numinosity of theos. The kind of influence which can nurture a 'delicate apprehending pneuma'.

Kaos. χάος.

numinous phaos. φῶς ἅγιον. Regarding the transliteration of φῶς - using the Homeric φάος (phaos) - see my commentary on Pœmandres 4; and regarding ἅγιος as 'numinous', rather than the conventional 'holy' or 'sacred', refer to the commentary on Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς above, and especially the note on the duality of the numinous in pagan weltanschauungen in my commentary on Pœmandres 5.

beneath (that) sandy ground. ὕφ’ ἄμμῳ. Regarding ἄμμος, qv. Xenophon, *Apomnemoneumata* 3.3.6 - πότερον ἐπάγειν τοὺς πολεμίους ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον κελεύσεις - for the reference, in context, seems to be to sandy ground or to sea marshes or, and perhaps more metaphorically, to waterlogged (boggy, unsuitable) land in general, and not necessarily (as some have theorized) to the sandy places and sand dunes in North Africa (such as in Egypt and Libya) as mentioned in Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 3.50.2, τὴν δὲ χρόαν ἄμμῳ παραπλησίαν ἔχουσι.

It is possible that ἄμμος, in regard to the ἱερός λόγος recounted in this tractate, had some esoteric or metaphysical meaning, now lost.

flowing (as in fluidic). The sense of ὑγρός here and in Pœmandres 4.

essence. οὐσίας. qv. Pœmandres 14.

parsements. For στοιχεῖον. qv. Pœmandres 8.

Coagulated. πήγνυμι.

<particularize>. As in 'distinguish between'. The MSS have καταδιερῶσι. Various emendations have been proposed, including καταδιορῶσι, while Wildberg has suggested that "and all of the deities..." - καὶ θεοὶ πάντες καταδιορῶσι - was originally marginalia.

2.

With all beings unformed and not yet presenced. ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἁπάντων καὶ ἀκατασκευάστων. An interesting phrase, with the English term 'presenced' perhaps expressing at least something of its philosophical implications derived as that term is from the noun 'presencing' (dating from c.1637) and meaning as it does "the action or process of making some-thing manifest and/or present and/or established." For, as the tractate goes to explain, what becomes formed and manifest are 'the seven-fold heavens' and deities, manifest as stars, within them.

In respect of ἀκατασκευάστων, while some commentators have pointed to Genesis 1:2 - ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, 'and the Earth was unperceived and formless' - as a parallel, σκευαστῶν occurs in Aristotle's Metaphysics (5.1013b) in reference to the classification of differences in

causation, such as whether or not something is 'manufactured', as in produced by an artisan (such as a statue, ἀνδριάς) or by some other means, and, regardless, πάντα ὅθεν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς μεταβολῆς ἢ στάσεως. Interestingly, in his commentary on the Metaphysics, Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Apposuit autem cum insit, ad differentiam privationis et contrarii: nam statua quidem fit ex aere, quod inest statuae iam factae; fit etiam ex infigurato, quod quidem non inest statuae iam factae. Unde aes est causa statuae, non autem infiguratum, cum sit principium per accidens tantum" (Commentaria, *In libros Physicorum*, 2, Lectio 5).

Thus, there is initially a 'privation of form', unformed being, which is then formed - as a statue from unshaped bronze - by theos as artisan-creator, and thus a possible metaphysical parallel in Pœmandres, such as in 31: πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων... οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων...ὁ λόγῳ συστησάμενος τὰ ὄντα [father of all beings...whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts...you who by logos form all being]. It is also interesting to compare all this with Plato's description in the Timaeus, 69b-c, in which his expression καὶ τῶν μὲν θείων αὐτὸς γίγνεται δημιουργός is noteworthy.

lightsome/burdensome. Used in preference to the less descriptive, ubiquitous, 'light' and 'heavy'. The whole passage is somewhat obscure, but if ἀποδιωρίσθη τὰ ἐλαφρὰ εἰς ὕψος was a metaphorical 'separating out' of what is 'light' from what is not light - rather than what is 'light' being somehow sent upwards, 'to the heights', or 'separated off upwards' - and, in particular, if ἀνακρεμασθέντων πνεύματι ὀχεῖσθαι was understood as referring to what - having been defined by, wrought in form through Fire, as bronze and iron are formed and shaped through fire - becomes elevated and conveyed by Pneuma, then philosophically it makes sense, especially given the Greek concept of the psyche (the immortal essence, or 'spirit') of sentient beings being conveyed through life and beyond (and presenced) by (or as) Pnuema, or by our mortal body (as mentioned by Plato).

seven spheres. qv. Pœmandres 9, 17, etcetera.

the outer revolving in the æther. The text is rather obscure, and one assumes 'the outer' refers to the outermost, the peripheral, sphere. Furthermore, I have here translated ἀήρ not as 'air' but as æther since ordinary, terrestrial, air is most certainly not what is meant and the ambiguous term æther (understood classically or otherwise) is suggestive of what may be meant. For whether ἀήρ here - as æther - refers to the fifth element as mentioned by Plato in *Epinomis* (981c) - πέντε οὖν ὄντων τῶν σωμάτων, πῦρ χρὴ φάναι καὶ ὕδωρ εἶναι καὶ τρίτον ἀέρα, τέταρτον δὲ γῆν, πέμπτον δὲ αἰθέρα - or whether it refers to a more mystical or esoteric, or hypothesized, substance that formed part of ἱεροί λόγοι, is an interesting question.

3.

So that there came-into-being beasts four-footed. cf. Pœmandres 11.

<Seeding within them> the semination of rebirth. τὸ σπέρμα τῆς παλιγγενεσίας ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐσπερμολόγουν. Although the text is obscure and has been variously emended by Reitzenstein, Nock, et al, the presumption is that this rebirth - or, alternatively, and more probably, this 'regeneration through offspring' - refers either to the deities themselves or (more probably) to the previously described living things which the deities brought-into-being.

My view is that what seems to be suggested by the text is that the deities seeded within living beings (human, animal, and otherwise) the ability to regenerate through offspring.

Thus can the offspring of mortals apprehend the works of theos. There is an interesting parallel here with some Quranic ayat, such as:

> "The creations in Heaven and Earth, the very change of Night to Day, are Signs [from Allah] for those gifted with understanding, those who whether sitting, standing or reclining on their sides, give praise to Allah and who frequently recall those creations in Heaven and Earth." 3:189-191 Interpretation of Meaning

mortals should husband all that is below the heavens. I take the sense of δεσποτεία here - given what precedes and what follows - to suggest husbandry (of Earth) rather than to mean power in the sense of mastery (as in over a slave).

appreciate honour. Given the context - mortals, theos, deities, physis - I take the meaning of ἀγαθός here to refer to what is personal, not to some abstract concept of 'good'. Hence the personal virtue of honour; to behaving, to living, in a noble, a valourous, way, as opposed to being dishonourable or cowardly; a contrast mentioned in the Iliad, Book 17, 631-2: τῶν μὲν γὰρ πάντων βέλε᾽ ἄπτεται ὅς τις ἀφήῃ ἠ κακὸς ἠ ἀγαθός [whether hurled by someone honourable or dishonourable, all of the missiles still strike their target].

The personal sense of ἀγαθός here also has the virtue of making what follows, at the end of section 3 - γνῶναι ἀγαθῶν καὶ φαύλων καὶ πᾶσαν ἀγαθῶν δαιδαλουργίαν εὑρεῖν - somewhat more understandable. Hence, a discovery or a learning of "all the arts of honour" in contrast to discovering "every artful workmanship of good things".

propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning. qv. Pœmandres 18.

a living witness of physis. The sense of ἐνεργοῦσαν here is poetically metaphysical, not literal. Hence a "living witness of physis" rather than an 'active' or 'working' one. An alternative would be 'presenced', suggested by Aristotle's Metaphysics: ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ τῆς κατὰ κίνησιν λεγομένης δυνάμεως

εἴρηται περὶ ἐνεργείας διορίσωμεν τί τέ ἐστιν ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ ποῖόν τι... ἔστι δὴ ἐνέργεια τὸ ὑπάρχειν τὸ πρᾶγμα μὴ οὕτως ὥσπερ λέγομεν δυνάμει. (1048a)

with every psyche, embodied in flesh. The text following this is (to the end of the tractate) is often so obscure (or corrupted) that any interpretation is tentative. Wildberg's suggestion that διὰ δρομήματος θεῶν ἐγκυκλίων τερασπορίας...καὶ φύσεως ἐνεργείας is marginalia, while interesting, does little to alleviate the obscurity of this part of the text.

mirificence. This rather neglected English word - from the post-classical Latin word mirificentia: the action or the fact of doing what is or appears to be wondrous, portentous - in my view expresses the meaning implicit in διὰ δρομήματος θεῶν ἐγκυκλίων τερασπορίας εἰς κατοπτείαν οὐρανοῦ somewhat better than such turns of phrase as "the wonder-working course of..," or "by portent-sowings of the course of..."

presenced. qv. the previous note on ἐνεργοῦσαν.

understand divine influence as wyrdful change. γνῶσιν θείας δυνάμεως μοίρης ὀχλουμένης. This exceptionally obscure Greek phrase has been interpreted in a variety of ways, with my interpretation just one among many. 'Wyrd' rather than 'fate', given how the term 'fate' has acquired contemporary meanings not relevant here.

all the arts of honour. Less poetically, more literally, "the skills of all the honourable arts".

4.

As is - by circumferent deities coursing - wyrdful. This is open to three different interpretations, as perhaps was intended. First, that it is the deities themselves who determine the wyrd of mortals. Second, that a person's wyrd can be discovered - learned, possibly predicted - by astrological means; that is, by understanding the movement of the planets and the stars associated with the deities since the "deities are represented in the arrangements of the stars". Third, given the septenary nature of the deities - for "the heavens are perceivable in seven spheres" - one's wyrd can be discovered by an esoteric and septenary anados as described in the Pœmandres tractate.

artialized. From verb artize - qv. 'artisements' below - and meaning here produced or constructed by an artisan or skilled craftsman.

which the passing of the seasons will fade. Not χρόνος as some abstract 'time' measured by some human manufactured mechanism such as a clock (a relatively recent concept, in terms of aeonic ἱεροί λόγοι), but rather measured by the passing of the seasons, as determined - for example - by the appearance and the disappearence in the night sky of certain constellations and stars:

θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ τῶνδ᾽ ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων
φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μῆκος, ἣν κοιμώμενος
στέγαις Ἀτρειδῶν ἄγκαθεν, κυνὸς δίκην,
ἄστρων κάτοιδα νυκτέρων ὁμήγυριν,
καὶ τοὺς φέροντας χεῖμα καὶ θέρος βροτοῖς
λαμπροὺς δυνάστας, ἐμπρέποντας αἰθέρι
ἀστέρας, ὅταν φθίνωσιν, ἀντολάς τε τῶν.

Again I have asked the gods to deliver me from this toil,
This vigil a year in length, where I repose
On Atreidae's roof on my arms, as is the custom with dogs
Looking toward the nightly assembly of constellations
And they who bring to mortals the storm-season and the summer:
Those radiant sovereigns, distinguished in the heavens
As stars when they come forth or pass away.

(Agamemnon, 1-7)

artisements. The products of the skilled work of the artisan and the artist; their artisanship; cf. the 16th century English verb artize: to exercise a skill, to pursue a skilled occupation such as that of an artisan.

the circumferent coursing of Physis. Given the context, I have - as at the beginning of the text - capitalized physis here.

mixion. Alternate (old) spelling of mixtion, meaning the condition or state of being mixed, melded, compounded, combined.

Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς

Chaldron Or Monas

Tractate IV

Introduction

The title given to the fourth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς, requires some consideration if it is to be translated without using English words that have, in the centuries since the text was written, acquired meanings which are not or which may not be relevant to or representative of the metaphysics, and the cosmogony, of such an ancient text; with an injudicious choice of words more often than not resulting in the modern reader projecting certain interpretations upon the text, as might be the case in translating, without some comment, κρατῆρ as 'basin', cup, or 'mixing bowl', μονάς as 'monad', and Τάτ as Thoth.

In respect of κρατῆρ, a more appropriate - and certainly more subtle - translation, given the esoteric nature and antiquity of the text, would be chaldron (an alternative spelling of 'cauldron'), since basin, cup, and 'mixing bowl' are not only too prosaic but also do not conjure the appropriate archetypal imagery: of the primal artisan-creator coagulating and mixing primal substances - qv. tractate III, Ιερός Λόγος - to produce, to bring-into-being by means of Logos, the cosmic order and thence mortal beings.

In respect of μονάς, the transliteration monas would be more appropriate - and certainly more subtle - than 'monad' given that the term monad is now so often associated with such weltanschauungen as those termed Pythagorean/neo-Pythagorean and Gnostic, an association which may or may not be relevant here. Furthermore, monas has a long and interesting esoteric usage, including (somewhat recently) by John Dee in his *Testamentum Johannis Dee Philosophi*

summi ad Johannem Gwynn, transmissum 1568 - a text included (on page 334) in Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, Containing Severall Poeticall Pieces of our Famous English philosophers, who have written the Hermetique Mysteries in their owne Ancient Language,* published in London in 1652 - who wrote "our Monas trewe thus use by natures Law, both binde and lewse", and who also entitled one of his works *Monas Hieroglyphica* (Antwerp, 1564), in which work he described (in Theorem XVIII) a septenary system somewhat similar to that of the Poemandres tractate:

In respect of Τάτ, while there is no disputing that Thoth is meant, what may or may not be implied by the name Thoth is whether or not there is a primarily Egyptian genesis for the metaphysics and the cosmogony of this particular tractate. For what does 'Egyptian' mean in the context of the Corpus Hermeticum, written when Egypt was a post-Ptolemaic Roman province where Hellenism still thrived? That is, is the text propounding a metaphysics and a cosmogony primarily redolent of indigenous, pre-Alexandrian, times, with Hermes Trismegistus simply a Hellenic name for the ancient Dynastic deity Thoth, and thus with the Greek Hermes possibly being a son of that ancient Egyptian deity? Or is the text redolent of a classical metaphysics and a cosmogony; or of a Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony; or of some syncretism of Egyptian (pre-Alexandrian) weltanschauungen with Hellenic mysticism? Or has the author (or authors) of Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς simply used the name of an ancient deity - Thoth - in order to appeal to an audience of Hellenized Egyptians, or Greeks/Romans dwelling in Egypt, or because it seemed to add some esoteric gravitas to the text? Or, as the title might be taken to imply - of Hermes *to* Thoth - is it a text intended to inform Egyptians (Hellenized or expatriate Greeks/Romans, or otherwise) about Greek/Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony, with Thoth thus regarded, symbolically, esoterically, or otherwise, as the son of the Greek divinity Hermes?

In this matter, I incline toward the view - based on some forty years of study of the Corpus Hermeticum and similar mystical and esoteric texts, classical, Hellenic, medieval, Arabic and otherwise - that what is imparted in this tractate, as with the Poemandres and Ιερός Λόγος, is primarily a mystical, and - for centuries - aural, Greek tradition, albeit one possibly influenced, over time and in some degree, by the metaphysical speculations of later philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. That is, that in Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς and Ιερός Λόγος and Ποιμάνδρης, we have an intimation of the metaphysics and the cosmogony taught to initiates of that (or those) ancient and aural and paganus Greek mystical tradition(s) mentioned by writers such as Herodotus. And an intimation that is not - a few borrowed illustrative terms notwithstanding - in any significant and metaphysical manner deriving from or influenced by Biblical stories or by early Christian theology or by indigenous Egyptian culture. In the matter of a paganus Greek mystical tradition, the opening of the fourth tractate is, metaphysically, very interesting:

> Επειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ ὥστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα
>
> Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos, you should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, as One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

For it is incorrect and misleading to write about those three tractates - and some other tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum - as being in any way indigenously Egyptian. Rather, their genesis - the tradition they represented - was the Greek culture of post-Alexandrian Egypt, a cultural influence so evident in the numerous papyri found in places such as Oxyrhynchus, containing as such papyri do verses from Homer, Sappho, Menander, Sophocles, and other Greek authors.

Commentary, Translation, and Text

The references in the commentary here to the *Pœmandres* and Ιερός Λόγος are to my translations of and commentary on those texts for, as I mentioned in my Ιερός Λόγος,

> I have retained the transliterations, and some of the English phrases, used and explained there, such as physis, phaos, theos. I have also, as there, occasionally used some particular, or some quite obscure English words - or forms of them - in order to try and elucidate the meaning of the text or to avoid using, in what is a metaphysical text, some commonplace term with various connotations (contemporary or otherwise) that may lead to a misunderstanding of the text. I have endeavoured to explain such obscure words in the commentary. There is thus in this translation, as in my translation of *Pœmandres*, a certain technical - or rather, esoteric - vocabulary.

As with my Ιερός Λόγος, I have here, purely for readability, arranged the translation into (non-poetic) verses rather than long paragraphs. All translations in the commentary are mine.

Translation

[1] Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos
You should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being,
As One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

That Being has no body that can be touched or seen or measured or which is separable
Or which is similar to any other body: not of Fire or Water or of Pneuma
Even though all such things are from that Being.
Since that Being is honourable, the desire was to entrust solely to that Being
Such a cosmic order on Earth:

[2] A cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings,
For just as the ever-living cosmic order had an advantage over them
So did they have an advantage over other living beings in their cosmos
Because of Logos and Perceiverance.
Thus did mortals perceive the works of theos, admire them,
Gaining knowledge of their creator.

[3] Thus, Thoth, to all mortals logos was assigned, but not perceiverance
Even though there was no ill-will, for such ill-will arrives not from there
But below, associated with mortals whose Psyche does not convey Perceiverance.

On account of what, father, did theos not assign perceiverance to all?

Son, the desire was to position it half-way between those psyches, as a reward.

[4] Where, then, was it placed?

In that large repleteful chaldron which was dispatched down
With an envoy assigned to declaim to the hearts of mortals:
If you have strength enough, immerse yourself in the chaldron
Should you accept you can ascend -
Having discovered how you came-into-being -
To the one who dispatched down that chaldron.

The many who understood that declaration and were immersive with perceiveration
Gained a certain knowledge, becoming more complete mortals
Through having received the perceiveration
While the many who misunderstood that declaration,
Having logos without the addition of perceiveration,
Are unperceptive regarding how and why they came-into-being.

[5] For they have the alertness similar to that of unthinking animals
And, having an angry and restive disposition,
Have no respect for what is really valuable
But instead follow bodily pleasures and their own desires
Confident as they are that mortals were born for such things.

And yet, Thoth, those who parten to that gift from theos become,
When set against their deeds, immortal instead of mortal

For they with their perceiverance apprehend the Earthly, the Heavenly,
And what is beyond the Heavens.
Having gone so far, they perceive what is honourable, and, having so perceived,
They regard what preceded this as a delay, as a problem
And, with little regard for whatever is embodied and disembodied,
They strive toward the Monas.

[6] This, Thoth, is the episteme of perceiveration,
Of <considering the divine> and of understanding divinity,
For the chaldron is numinous.

Father, I also desire to be so immersed.

My son, primarily, unless you have a prejudice about the body
You cannot have affection for yourself, and when you have affection for yourself
You can acquire perceiverance and, having perceiverance,
You can participate in episteme.

Can you, father, explain that?

It is not possible, my son, to be of both the deathful and the divine.
For there are two kinds of existents, the bodily and the non-bodily,
Perceived as deathful and divine; a choice of one or of the other
Should there be a desire to do so. It cannot be both
With the decline of one uncovering the reality of the other.

[7] By choosing the higher not only is there a good ending - the apotheosis of the mortal -
For the one who chooses but also a numinous awareness of theos,
While, if the lower, although it has been the ruination of mortals
It is no termeration against theos
But rather something garish that passes by amid us yet is unaffective
Even if an impediment to others
Just as those others are garishly worldly
Having been influenced by bodily pleasures.

[8] Because of this, then - Thoth - what is from theos can be and has been ours
So let what accompanies us be that now instead of later.
For it is we who select dishonour rather than honour
With theos blameless in this.
Do you, my son, apprehend how many celestial bodies we have to traverse -
How many groups of Daimons and sequential constellations -
So that we hasten to the Monas.

For the honourable is unpassable, without limit, and unending
Even though to us its origin appears to be the knowledge.

[9] But even though such knowledge is not the origin of it
It yields to us the origin of our knowing.
Thus should we apprehend such an origin and hasten upon our journey
For it is not easy to abandon what we have become accustomed to
And go back to what is elden and in the past.

What is apparent can please us while what is concealed can cause doubt
With what is bad often overt while the honourable is often concealed
Having as it has neither pattern nor guise.

Which is why it is akin to itself but different from everything else
For it is not possible for what is disembodied to be overtly embodied.

[10] This is the distinction between what is akin and what is different
With what is different having a privation of what is akin.

Since the Monas is the origin and foundation of everything
It is within everything as origin and foundation
For if there is no origin there is nothing
And the origin is not from anything but itself
Since it is the origin of everything else,
Just as the Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos
Without itself being enfolded by any,
Begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any:

[11] Everything that is begotten is unfinished, partible,
Liable to decline, resurgence
Which do not befall what is complete
For what is resurgent is resurgence from Monas
But what is brought low is so by its own malady
Because unable to hold Monas.

This, then, Thoth, is the eikon of the theos
Insofar as it can be drawn:
If you - clearly, carefully - and with the eyes of your heart apprehend it
Then I assure you, my son, that you shall find the path to what is above:
In truth, the eikon will guide you
Since the seeing of it is uniquely your own,
For those who attain such a beholding are attentively held, pulled up,
Just as it is said lodestone does with iron.

Commentary

1.

artisan. δημιουργόν. See Poemandres 9. The theme of an artisan-creator, and their artisements, is common to the third tractate (Ιερός Λόγος) as well. That the tractate begins by using the term artisan, rather than theos, is perhaps significant.

that Being. The conventional and grammatical interpretation is "you should understand *him* as..." although how such a human-type gender could be adduced from or manifest by how the 'body' of the artisan-creator is described in subsequent verses is an interesting and relevant metaphysical question.

Can, or should, a 'body' that cannot be touched, that cannot be seen, that

cannot be measured, that is not separable - οὐδὲ διαστατόν - and thus which is not conventionally 'human', be described as male? It is to suggest such metaphysical questions (and the limitations of ordinary language in describing and answering such metaphysical questions) that I have here departed from convention and used 'that Being' instead of 'him'. The term 'Being' also has the advantage that it avoids the gender bias implicit in translating θεὸς as 'god' given that 'god/God' implies a male entity.

There is also an interesting and perhaps relevant mention, in the second tractate of the Corpus, of the one, the being, who - like an artisan - constructs things: ὁ οὖν θεὸς <τὸ> ἀγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα προσηγορία ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ πατρός, πάλιν διὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν πάντων. πατρὸς γὰρ τὸ ποιεῖν. (Thus theos is the noble and the noble is theos, although another title is that of father because the artifex of all being. For it is of a father to construct.)

However, in terms of gender and Hellenic mythos and metaphysics, it is sometimes overlooked that Γαία, Earth Mother, in one of the Homeric hymns, Εἰς Γῆν Μητέρα Πάντων, is described as πρέσβιστος: the elder among beings, and the mother of the gods, θεῶν μήτηρ. Thus, while it might be of "a father to construct" it is "of a mother to bring forth life", to give birth to beings, including the gods themselves.

presential. πάρειμι. Presential - from the classical Latin praesentia - means "having or implying actual presence", as manifesting (as being presenced) in a locality or with an individual, and is thus more apposite here than the rather bland word 'present'. Cf. the use of 'presenced' in Ιερός Λόγος 2, et sequentia.

One only. ἑνὸς μόνου. A formulaic mystic phrase, implying uniqueness. Cf. ordinary usage in Plato, *Crito* 47, ἢ ἑνὸς μόνου ἐκείνου [...] ἑνὸς μόνου.

thelesis. θέλησις. Given what follows - τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν - a transliteration to suggest something other than a human type 'will' or 'desire'; such as 'disposition'. That is, Being (whatsoever of whomsoever Being is, in terms of gender and otherwise) is predisposed to craft - to presence - being as beings: as immortals (deities), as mortals (humans) and otherwise, qv. Ιερός Λόγος, Poemandres 8 ff, and Poemandres 31: οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων (whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts).

formed. As an artisan forms their artisements, and thus manifests their skill, their artistry, in what they produce. That is, the artisan-creator has formed, crafted, being (all existence) as beings.

(not) *separable*. οὐδὲ διαστατόν. What is not meant is 'dimension', given what the term 'dimension' now imputes scientifically and otherwise.

Pneuma. πνεῦμα. A transliteration for reasons explained in my commentary on

the text of Poemandres 5:

> given that the English alternatives - such as 'spirit' or 'breath' - not only do not always describe what the Greek implies but also suggest things not always or not necessarily in keeping with the Hellenic nature of the text. This particular transliteration has a long history in English, dating back to 1559 CE. In 1918, DeWitt Burton published a monograph - listing, with quotations, the various senses of πνεῦμα - entitled *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918).
>
> I incline toward the view that πνεῦμα here - like λόγος - does not necessarily imply something theological (in the Christian sense or otherwise) but rather suggests an alternative, more personal, weltanschauung that, being a weltanschauung, is undoctrinal and subtle, and which weltanschauung is redolent of Hellenic culture. Subtle and undoctrinal in the way that early alchemical texts are subtle and undoctrinal and try to express, or hint at (however obscurely to us, now), a weltanschauung, and one which is more paganus than Christian.

Even though all such things are from that Being. ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. Literally, 'even though all are from that'. One therefore might understand it to imply 'even though all beings/things are from that Being.'

honourable. ἀγαθός. qv. Poemandres 22, where I referenced a quotation from the Corpus Aristotelicum:

> τῆς δὲ φρονήσεώς ἐστι τὸ βουλεύσασθαι, τὸ κρῖναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἱρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πᾶσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὁμιλῆσαι ὀρθῶς [De Virtutibus et Vitiis Libellus 1250a]
>
> It is part of wisdom to accept advice, to distinguish the honourable, the dishonourable, and all that is, in life, acceptable or to be avoided; to fairly use all resources; to be genuine in company.

Honourable - noble - rather than some abstract or dogmatically defined 'good'. That is, the Hellenic distinction is between good (honourable) personal character and bad (dishonourable) personal character rather than - as for example in Christianity - referencing some abstract, or God-given or dogmatically (Church) defined 'good'.

entrust solely to. I follow the MSS, which have μόνῳ, with οὐ μόνῳ being a fairly recently emendation which completely changes the meaning.

orderly arrangement. κοσμέω. In esoteric terms, a presencing, on Earth, of the cosmic order itself, qv. Poemandres 8: "having comprehended the logos and having seen the beauty of the cosmic order, re-presented it..."

Regarding 'presencing', qv. my translation of and commentary on section two of the third tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, Ιερός Λόγος:

> ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἁπάντων καὶ ἀκατασκευάστων.
>
> With all beings unformed and not yet presenced.

2.

a cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings. κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον. That is, human beings re-present, presence, the 'divine body' and are, of themselves, a reflection of the cosmic order itself. This, and the preceding line, express a fundamental part of ancient and Renaissance hermeticism: human beings as a microcosm of the cosmic order and the divine.

Hence why the twenty-sixth chapter of the book *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* by Marsilii Ficini (published in 1489 CE) has as its heading:

> Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona.
>
> How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presenced therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned.

Also, in respect of ἄνθρωπος I have used here - as in my Poemandres - the gender neutral 'human being' instead of the more usual 'man', and also - as there - occasionally used the term 'mortal' when the context suggests it.

Regarding 'the cosmic order' (κόσμος) itself qv. Poemandres 7; 14, and Ιερός Λόγος 4:

> The divine is all of that mixion: renewance of the cosmic order through Physis
> For Physis is presenced in the divine.

a deathful life and yet a deathless life. This (including the borrowing of the terms deathful and deathless, in juxtaposition, from Chapman) is explained in section 14 of the Poemandres tractate:

> θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον.

deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal.

Logos and Perceiverance. In my commentary on the Poemandres tractate I have explained my reasons for transliterating (and sometimes capitalizing) λόγος as logos (qv. the commentary on section 5) - rather than as 'Word' or 'Speech' - and for translating νοῦς as perceiverance/perceiveration rather than as the conventional 'mind' (see for example the commentary on sections 2 and 10). Refer also to comments there regarding terms such as pneumal logos (πνευματικὸν λόγον), phaomal logos (φωτεινὸς λόγος) and θεοῦ λόγος.

Here Logos suggests 'reasoning', with perceiverance having its usual sense of 'awareness', of comprehending what is perceived, as for example, in being able to rationally or intuitively assess a situation, a person, or persons. As with (and for example) Logos, Psyche, and Physis, perceiverance - capitalized as Perceiverance - can also be personified and thus regarded as a fundamental quality germane to the life of deathful mortals.

3.

whose Psyche does not convey Perceiverance. It is possible to see in this an esoteric allusion to psyche personified, especially given what follows: τοῦτον ἐν μέσῳ ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὥσπερ ἆθλον ἱδρῦσθαι. In ancient mythology - such as the ancient myth of Psyche and Eros, retold by Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses,* which was written around the same time as this Hermetic tractate, and which story also involves Hermes - Psyche initially lacked perceiverance but through striving to succeed in the trials given to her by Aphrodite she acquires it.

Hence why here I have personified both psyche and perceiverance. I have also transliterated ψυχή so as, as I noted in my Poemandres, to not impose a particular meaning on the text. For whether what is meant is anima mundi, or the ancient paganus sense of the 'spark' - the source, or breath - of life, or what we now denote by the terms 'soul' and 'spirit', is open to debate, especially as the terms soul and spirit possess much later and modern connotations that may not be relevant to such an ancient text. Connotations such as suggesting the incorporeal, or immaterial being, as distinct from body or matter; or the Christian concept of the soul.

As an illustration of matters of interpretation, two subtly different senses of ψυχή are evident in the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles:

τῶνδε γὰρ πλέον φέρω
τὸ πένθος ἢ καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς πέρι.

For my concern for their suffering

Is more than even that for my own psyche.

vv.93-4

ἀλλά μοι δυσμόρῳ γᾶ φθινὰς
τρύχει ψυχάν, τάδ᾽ εἰ κακοῖς κακὰ
προσάψει τοῖς πάλαι τὰ πρὸς σφῷν.

But ill-fated would be my breath of life - which the decay in this soil
Already wears down - if to those troubles of old
There was joined this trouble between you and him.

vv.665-667

In respect of ψυχή, the Hermetic text here implies that ill-will is associated with those whose nature is such that they lack the ability to rationally or intuitively assess and comprehend a situation or other people.

father. ὦ πάτερ is a traditional way of showing respect for an elder, in this case of Thoth for Hermes.

position it half-way between those psyches, as a reward. Thus, while Logos is a gift to all mortals from theos, Perceiverance is not and has to be earned, striven for, as an athlete has to strive to earn a prize. [The English word athlete is related to the Greek word used here - ἆθλον - via the Greek ἀθλητής and thence the classical Latin athleta.]

chaldron. κρατῆρ. See the Introduction.

envoy. While the conventional translation here of κῆρυξ is 'herald', I consider it unsatisfactory given what that English term now often denotes: either the type of herald familiar from the New Testament or the herald of medieval literature and stories (qv. Morte Arthure, and The Knights Tale by Chaucer). Given the Greco-Roman context (Hermes, Thoth) and classical antecedents (such as Hermes as the protector of mortal envoys and messengers) then 'envoy' is more accurate especially given that this is an envoy from the artisan-creator assigned to impart information to mortals.

Ascend to the one [...] how you came-into-being. There are similarities here to the Poemandres tractate in relation to the anados - the journey up through the spheres (Poemandres 24) toward theos - and the desire "to apprehend the physis of beings" (Poemandres 3).

and were immersive with perceiveration. καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός. That is, were or became characterized by having become immersed with - suffused by -

perceiveration.

Here, as elsewhere the understanding of νοῦς as perceiverance/perceiveration rather than as 'mind' makes the text understandable: for the mortals became suffused with a particular (and, for most, probably a new type of) perception, a new way of seeing the world, themselves, and other mortals, and thus acquire a particular type of knowing, whereas an expression such as "immersed themselves with mind" is obscure to the point of being either unintelligible or requiring a long discourse on the nature of "mind" based as such discourses invariably are on certain philosophical assumptions.

The sense of acquiring a new way of seeing the world, themselves, and other mortals is evident in the text that follows: οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως (gained, acquired, partook of, a knowing).

more complete mortals. The sense of τέλειος here is not that of being 'perfect' but rather of being 'entire', more completed, 'more rounded', than others. Thus there is no sense of "perfect people" or "perfect humans" - with implied moral, and other, superiority - but rather of those who, having a different perception of things to most others, were akin to initiates of a mystical or an esoteric tradition: apart from others because of that particular knowledge that their new, initiated, perception, has brought, but still mortal. This sense is evident in the text that follows: τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι.

received the perceiveration. It is possible that this is an allusion to 'the perceiverance' - the gnosis - that initiates of a particular mystic or esoteric tradition acquire when certain esoteric, mystic, knowledge is imparted to them.

4.

declaim to the hearts of mortals. A figurative usage of 'heart', referring here as often elsewhere in Greek and Hellenic culture to the feelings, the emotions (qv. Iliad, Book IX, 646 and The Odyssey, Book XVII, 489) as well as to the ethos, the nature, and the understanding, of the individual.

See also "with the eyes of the heart" in section 11.

5.

*alertnes*s. αἴσθησις. For which see Poemandres 1. The sense is that they are always alert, and - like animals - react instinctively because they lack the objective awareness that perceiverance (νοῦς) brings and which objective awareness (of themselves and others) makes mortals into complete human beings.

Confident. Given the context, πιστεύω here suggests 'confidence' rather than 'belief'; for this is the arrogant instinctive confidence of those who lack

perceiverance and who have no firm belief in anything other than their own bodily pleasure and fulfilling their desires and who thus reject - or who cannot intuit - the numinous perspective of the divine, a perspective which would reveal the possibility of immortality.

parten to that gift [...] when set against their deeds. The text suggests that the gift of immortality which theos gives is freely bestowed among those whose deeds reveal that they have understood what the chaldron is and does, with the fourteenth century English word parten [to have something in common with something or someone else] expressing the meaning here of the Greek μετέχω.

apprehend the Earthly, the Heavenly, and what is beyond the Heavens. An alternative - following the Latin version of the text - omnia complexi sua mente, et terrena et caelestia et si quid est supra caelum - would be "apprehend the terran, the celestial, and what is beyond the celestial."

(as a) problem. The context suggests that what is meant is that life before "having so perceived" was a problem, not that it was a 'misfortune' or a calamity. A problem - a challenge - to overcome, which challenge they accepted leading to them gaining the prize, for theos had positioned that prize "half-way between those psyches, as a reward."

The same sense in respect of συμφορά is apparent in Oedipus Tyrannus by Sophocles:

> θεοῖσι μέν νυν οὐκ ἰσούμενόν σ᾽ ἐγὼ
> οὐδ᾽ οἵδε παῖδες ἑζόμεσθ᾽ ἐφέστιοι,
> ἀνδρῶν δὲ πρῶτον ἔν τε συμφοραῖς βίου
> κρίνοντες ἔν τε δαιμόνων συναλλαγαῖς
>
> Not as an equal of the gods do I,
> And these children who sit by your altar, behold you -
> But as the prime man in our problems of life
> And in our dealings and agreements with daimons.
>
> vv. 31-34

disembodied. ἀσώματος - etymologically, a privation of σωματικός - occurs in works by Aristotle and, perhaps more relevant here, in writers such as Iamblichus who in De Mysteriis, V, 16 writes in general terms about the body in relation to offering to the gods and daimons that which, or those things which, might free the body from ailments and bring health, and the necessity in such matters as offerings of not considering the body in either non-bodily or noetic terms:

> τότε δὴ οὖν οὐ δήπου νοερῶς καὶ ἀσωμάτως τὸ σῶμα

> μεταχειριζόμεθα· οὐ γὰρ πέφυκε τῶν τοιούτων τρόπων τὸ σῶμα μετέχειν· τῶν δὲ συγγενῶν ἑαυτῷ μεταλαγχάνον, σώμασι σῶμα θεραπεύεταί τε καὶ ἀποκαθαίρεται.

Thus the sense of καταφρονήσαντες πάντων τῶν σωματικῶν καὶ ἀσωμάτων ἐπὶ τὸ ἓν seems to be that what is important is a striving for the monas not a noetic concern for the difference between whatever is embodied and whatever is considered disembodied.

Monas. μονάς. A transliteration since it here does not necessarily, as I noted in the Introduction, signify "The One, The Only" (τὸ ἓν) of such weltanschauungen as those termed Pythagorean, neo-Pythagorean, or Gnostic; or 'the one God' of religious monotheisms such as Christianity.

6.

episteme. A transliteration of ἐπιστήμη, which could be - and has been - accented thus: épistémé. The meaning is 'a way', or a means or a method, by which something can be known, understood, and appreciated. In this case, perceiveration, which the artisan-creator has positioned "half-way between psyches, as a reward."

Episteme, therefore, should be considered a technical, esoteric, term associated with some of the weltanschauungen that are described in the Corpus Hermeticum. Thus, in the Poemandres tractate, the anados through the seven spheres is an episteme.

considering the divine. The MSS have ἐντορία and various emendations, recent and otherwise, have been proposed including ἐυτορία and ιστορία. Interestingly, the Renaissance Latin text published in 1554 has, for the line, 'scientia mentis est diuinorum contemplatio & intelligentia dei, diuino existente cratere' with Parthey's 1854 edition reading 'mentis scientia, divinorum inspectio et dei comprehensio, quia divinus est crater.'

I am inclined toward ιστορία, which conveys the sense here of considering, of obtaining information about - of contemplating - divinity, the numinous, and thus the relation of mortals to divinity. A sense which fits will with the following καὶ ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ κατανόησις.

For the chaldron is numinous. θείου ὄντος τοῦ κρατῆρος. For θεῖος here I have opted for the English word numinous (dating from 1647 and from the classical Latin term numen) to express the sense of inclusion - of/from the divinity and of itself being divine - that the word 'divine' by itself does not, particularly given the previous "considering the divine and of understanding divinity."

Primarily, unless you have a prejudice about the body. Ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτοντὸ σῶμά σου μισήσῃς. To always - regardless of textual context and milieu - translate

μισέω/μῖσος as "hate" is or can be misleading, given how the English word hate implies (and is understood as meaning) an extreme personal emotion, an intense personal aversion to something, and also a certain malevolence. Consider, for example, the following from Thucydides:

> ἀπὸ τούτου τε πρῶτον Περδίκκας Βρασίδαν τε πολέμιον ἐνόμισε καὶ ἐς τὸ λοιπὸν Πελοποννησίων τῇ μὲν γνώμῃ δι᾽ Ἀθηναίους οὐ ξύνηθες μῖσος εἶχε, τῶν δὲ ἀναγκαίων ξυμφόρων διαναστὰς ἔπρασσεν ὅτῳ τρόπῳ τάχιστα τοῖς μὲν ξυμβήσεται, τῶν δὲ ἀπαλλάξεται. (4.128)

His reaching an agreement with the Peloponnesians while at the same time still being determined to be rid of his foe does not imply an implacable, intense, personal hatred in the first place, but rather a generalized dislike (in this case just a certain prejudice) of the kind that can be dispensed with if it is personally - or strategically - advantageous to do so. Thus to translate the relevant part as "it was then that Perdiccas first considered Brasidas his foe and felt a prejudice toward the Peloponnesians" seems apt, especially given the qualification mentioned in the text: τῇ μὲν γνώμη δι᾽ Ἀθηναίους.

The preference for the metaphysical, for striving for immortality and for understanding the numinous, that this tractate describes is not, as some have assumed, an ascetic "hatred" of the physical body. Instead, it is just a positive bias in favour of such metaphysical, spiritual matters, and a prejudice against a fixation on bodily and material things.

This preference is also evident in Poemandres 19:

> "they of self-knowledge attained a particular benefit while they who, misled by Eros, love the body, roamed around in the dark, to thus, perceptively, be afflicted by death."

For, as noted in my commentary on τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα in Poemandres 19:

> The consensus is, and has been, that ἔρωτα here signifies 'carnal desire' - or something similar - so that it is assumed that what is meant is some sort of ascetic (or Gnostic or puritanical) statement about how sexual desire should be avoided or at the very least controlled. However, this seems rather at variance with the foregoing - regarding propagating and spawning - which inclines me to suggest that what is meant here is 'eros', not necessarily personified as the classical deity (ἠδ᾽ Ἔρος ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ᾽ ἀνθρώπων δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν), although the comparison is interesting, but rather as an elemental or archetypal principle, akin to νοῦς and λόγος. Consider, for example, the following from Daphnis and Chloe, written by Longus around the same time as the Corpus Hermeticum: πάντως

γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἔρωτα ἔφυγεν ἢ φεύξεται μέχρις ἂν κάλλος ᾖ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ βλέπωσιν [Book 1, Proem, 4 - "no one can avoid or has ever been able to avoid Eros, while there is beauty and eyes which perceive"]. In modern terms, few - poetically, metaphorically, none - have avoided or could avoid, at some time in their life, the unconscious power of the anima/animus.

There are two kinds of existents, bodily and non-bodily. δύο γὰρ ὄντων τῶν ὄντων. This duality, in respect of mortals, is evident in the Poemandres tractate:

> διὰ τοῦτο παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς ζῷα διπλοῦς ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον
>
> distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal
>
> (Poemandres 15)

This contrast between the deathful body and the immortality that is possible (the potential for immortality that lies within mortals) is essentially the same as the one described here: the bodily and the divine, the embodied and the disembodied.

7.

apotheosis of the mortal. Not here a literal making of "the mortal into a god" or even an actual "deification of the mortal" (by whomsoever) but rather a bringing about in the mortal an apotheosis - ἀποθέωσις - in the sense of an ascension toward immortality, a spiritual journey from earthly life, a figurative resurrection of, or actual elevation in, the life of the mortal.

This latter sense is evident in the use of ἀποθέωσις by Cicero in his Epistularum Ad Atticum - videsne consulatum illum nostrum, quem Curio antea ἀποθέωσιν vocabat, si hic factus erit, fabam mimum futurum (Liber Primus, XVI, 13) - for this early use of the Greek word concerns the elevated rank of Consul, and thus the honour and privileges that such a privileged rank brings.

a numinous awareness of theos. In respect of εὐσεβέω as an "awareness of the numinous" qv. my Poemandres, 22.

termeration. From the Latin termero and thus appropriate here, given the context, in respect of πλημμελέω, suggesting as it can both a violation and a profanation, while avoiding the interpretation that words such as "transgression" (toward god), "trespassed (against god) and "offence" (against god) impute, especially given the usual translations of Christian texts written in

Greek, such as translations of the following from the Septuagint: ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ περὶ ἑνὸς ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν ἐποίησεν καὶ ἐπλημμέλησεν αὐτῷ (Leviticus 5, 26).

something garish that passes by. The exact meaning of πομπή here is unclear, with suggestions ranging from parade, pageant, to procession (religious or otherwise), which all seem out of context since they all can have an affect, a purpose, and can achieve things other than just being a hindrance to passers-by.

The context suggests something metaphorical and similar to what Cicero wrote:

> quem tu mihi addidisti sane ad illum σύλλογον personam idoneam. Videbis igitur, si poteris, ceteros, ut possimus πομπεῦσαι καὶ τοῖς προσώποις (Epistularum Ad Atticum, Liber Tertius Decimus, 32:3)

That is, similar to a showy or affected countenance or facade or personae, or an act, or some pompous attempt to impress which however is not effective as in Oedipus Tyrannus:

> εἰπὼν ἄπειμ᾽ ὧν οὕνεκ᾽ ἦλθον οὐ τὸ σὸν
> δείσας πρόσωπον οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ᾽ ὅπου μ᾽ ὀλεῖς
>
> I shall go but speak that for which I was fetched, with no dread
> Because of your countenance. For you cannot harm me. (448)

garishly worldly. I take the sense of κόσμος here to refer to 'that cosmos' - the world of mortals - previously described as "the cosmos of the divine body": the microcosm which the artisan-creator crafted and in which we mortals have our being. See the commentary in section 2 on the phrase *a cosmos of the divine body*.

Hence the poetic metaphor here: garishly worldly. Of living a garish - facile - life in our microcosm even though the artisan-creator has provided a means for us to attain immortality and thus, as described in the Poemandres tractate, become a part of a higher, a divine, cosmic order.

8.

select dishonour For κακός as 'bad' and 'dishonourable' rather than 'evil' refer to my commentary on Poemandres 22 from which this is an extract:

> "The usual translation of κακός here, as often elsewhere, is 'evil'. However, I regard such a translation as unhelpful, given that the English word 'evil' is (1) now often interpreted and understood in a moralistic, preconceived, way according to some theological

dogma/criteria and/or according to some political/social doctrine, and (2) that it does not denote what the classical and the Hellenic term κακός does. Classically understood κακός is what is bad in the sense of some-thing rotten or unhealthy, or – the opposite of κάλος – what is displeasing to see. κακός is also what is unlucky, a misfortune, and/or injurious [...] When applied to a person, the sense is of a 'rotten' person; someone with bad, harmful, physis; a bad - dishonourable, weak, cowardly - personal character."

theos blameless in this. In respect of ἀναίτιος, compare Agamemnon 1505:

> ὡς μὲν ἀναίτιος εἶ
> τοῦδε φόνου τίς ὁ μαρτυρήσων
>
> Is there anyone who will bear witness
> That you are blameless in this killing?

celestial body. By σῶμα (body) here is meant the celestial body, the 'harmonious structure', which is described in terms of seven spheres in the Poemandres tractate and which mortals must ascend through in sequence in order to attain immortality and thus be in the company of theos. This ascension through the spheres is there described as an anados - ἔτι δέ μοι εἰπὲ περὶ τῆς ἀνόδου τῆς γινομένης - with Poemandres (in section 25) describing the journey in detail, with each sphere represented by one of the seven classical planets:

> καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον [...]
>
> Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning [...]

Plato, in Timaeus 32c, uses σῶμα to refer to the substance - the body - of the cosmos as being formed from fire, water, air and earth:

> ὸν ἀριθμὸν τεττάρων τὸ τοῦ κόσμου σῶμα ἐγεννήθη δι᾽ ἀναλογίας ὁμολογῆσαν

sequential constellations. In context, συνέχειαν καὶ δρόμους ἀστέρω suggests a type of movement, a path, through certain stars or constellations. That is, a particular or ordered sequence: the anados through the septenary system, with it being possible that the use here of ἀστήρ (star) - rather than κύκλος (sphere,

orb) as in Poemandres - implied an aural esoteric tradition associating each sphere with a corresponding star or constellation, an ancient tradition found in Renaissance alchemical and magical texts.

the honourable is unpassable. Reading ἀδιάβατον, which implies that what is honourable is always there, always around, always noticeable when it is presenced by someone. In other words - given the following καὶ ἀπέραντον καὶ ἀτελές - there are always some mortals who will (qv. sections 5 and 8) select honour rather than dishonour: who will (as described in section 4) "receive the perceiveration," having won that prize gifted by theos.

9.

Even though to us its origin appears to be the knowledge. The expression ἡμῖν δὲ δοκοῦν ἀρχὴν ἔχειν τὴν γνῶσιν is interesting given that it refers to 'the knowledge', which some have construed to refer to the gnosis of certain pagan weltanschauungen. However, since what this particular knowledge is, is not specified, to translate as 'the Gnosis' would be to impose a particular and modern interpretation on the text given what the term gnosticism now denotes. All that can be adduced from the text is that this particular knowledge may refer to and be the knowledge imparted in the text itself: the knowledge that Hermes is here imparting to Thoth.

The word translated here as origin is ἀρχή and which Greek term has various philosophical connotations in Anaximander, Plato, et al. What it here denotes, as evident in the text that follows (sections 10 and 11), is origin, beginning, source.

not the origin of it. Referring to what is honourable and its origin/beginning.

hasten upon our journey. While the text - λαβώμεθα οὖν τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ ὁδεύσωμεν τάχει ἅπαντα - is somewhat obscure it seems reasonable to assume that what is meant or implied is the necessity of beginning - of hastening upon - the complete, the entire, journey toward the Monas with all that implies in terms of everything encountered along the way.

not easy. The sense of σκολιόν here - in the context of leaving what one has become accustomed to and is comfortable with - suggests 'tangled', indirect, 'not straightforward', 'tortuous', and thus 'not easy'.

elden. A rather obscure English word meaning 'belonging to earlier times', and used to avoid the negative connotations that words such as 'ancient' can imply.

What is apparent can please [...] neither pattern nor guise. τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαινόμενα τέρπει, τὰ δὲ ἀφανῆ δυσπιστεῖν ποιεῖ. φανερώτερα δέ ἐστι τὰ κακά, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανεροῖς

This is an interesting passage, often interpreted in terms of moral abstractions, of 'good' and 'evil'. However, as previously mentioned, I incline toward the somewhat iconoclastic view that there is a more Greek, a more Hellenic, and an essentially pagan, interpretation of ἀγαθός consistent with the Greek mystery traditions, with Homer, with the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and with how theos was generally understood in ancient Greece and in Greco-Roman, Hellenistic, times. Which is of ἀγαθός - and of κακός - (i) when referring to mortals as referring to personal character, of character being most often revealed by deeds, by what has been observed because done visibly, or to outward appearance in terms of τὸ καλόν, of what is considered beautiful or not beautiful; and (ii) when used of things - living or dead - as referring to the difference between 'rotten', bad', and what is not rotten, as in a rotten tree or a piece of food.

What is expressed here is of how outward appearances can please, how we can be suspicious - doubtful - about what is concealed, what has not yet been revealed; with what is bad often outwardly obvious (as in the case of a rotten tree or a rotten person) but with what is good, honourable, often being concealed because it has no particular pattern or guise until it has been revealed, for example by noble, honourable deeds. Thus the suggestion seems to be that there is or can be a revealing of what is good when mortals seek the theos-gifted prize of perceiveration, which seeking of that prize, and winning it, is of itself a good, a necessary, an honourable, thing to do, leading at it does to a hastening toward the Monas.

The passage also invites comparison with one in Plato's Republic and one in Aristotle's Metaphysics.

In Book XII, 1074b, Aristotle wrote:

> τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχει τινὰς ἀπορίας: δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον, πῶς δ᾽ ἔχων τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη, ἔχει τινὰς δυσκολίας

The expression δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον has led to disputations among some scholars with some considering the passage corrupt and in need of emendation, for their difficulty lies in Aristotle apparently stating that 'Mind' is, like other phenomena, perceptible to our senses. However, if one does not translate νοῦς as 'Mind' - with all the preconceptions, philosophical an otherwise, that have over centuries become attached to that term - and one also appreciates that φαίνω here as sometimes elsewhere is not a simple 'observing' - of seeing, of observing, phenomena - but rather a revealing, then there is little if any difficulty. For instance, does the following interpretation of part of that passage make sense with respect to phenomena? "Perceiveration, of all revealing, appears to be the most numinous."

Indeed so, because perceiveration is a perception involving a certain

awareness, a revealing to us, of what is observed; that is, an apprehension, and Aristotle's reasoning (insofar as I understand it) is that this awareness - νοῦς - is the most numinous, 'the most divine', revealing because we mortals can apprehended, be or become aware of, and thus have knowledge of, theos. Which is basically what Hermes has in this tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum imparted to Thoth.

In Book VII, 517β - 517ξ, of the Republic, Plato wrote:

> τὰ δ᾽ οὖν ἐμοὶ φαινόμενα οὕτω φαίνεται, ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ τελευταία ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα καὶ μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι

Which brings us, again, to ἀγαθός invariably translated as it hitherto has been - in respect of the Corpus Hermeticum, and many of the writings of Aristotle and Plato - as an abstraction termed 'good', as well it might be in respect of Plato given that he posits an abstract (a true, ideal) beauty and an abstract (true, ideal) being, as in Phaedo 78b where he writes about *αὐτὸ* τὸ καλόν and about *αὐτὸ* ἕκαστον ὃ ἔστιν, and why in Symposium 210e - 211a he states regarding his ideal, his form, his ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος, which he sometimes and confusingly uses interchangeably, that:

> πρῶτον μὲν ἀεὶ ὂν καὶ οὔτε γιγνόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλύμενον, οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον
>
> Firstly, it always exists, and has no genesis. It does not die, does not grow, does not decay.

What, therefore, seems to have occurred, in respect of this and other tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum, is the assumption that ἀγαθός always refers back to Plato's ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος (and to those influenced by him or are assumed to be his precursors) leading to moralistic interpretations such as that of Mead where ἀγαθός is divorced from the physis (φύσις), the character, the individuality, of mortals: "evils are the more apparent things, whereas the Good can never show Itself unto the eyes, for It hath neither form nor figure." Thus, that in respect of mortals, ἀγαθός, rather than having its genesis, its origin, its very being, in some individual mortals - and attainable by others because of the prize of perceiverance offered by theos - is considered as something external which could be attained by, which has its being in, is embodied by, such abstractions (the 'politics') as Plato delineates in his theorized Republic and in such abstractions as were posited by the early Christian Church.

For it is not possible for what is disembodied to be overtly embodied. ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἀσώματον σώματι φανῆναι. That is, it is not possible to discern who is honourable from their outward appearance, for what is honourable is manifest, revealed, through personal deeds.

10.

enfolds every arithmos [...] begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any. This passage, with its mention of ἀριθμός, is often assumed to refer to the Pythagorean doctrine regarding numbers since ἀριθμός is invariably translated as 'number' - thus implying what the English word implies, especially in mathematical terms - even though Aristotle, in discussing ἀριθμός, wrote: ἄλλος δέ τις τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τὸν τῶν εἰδῶν ἕνα εἶναι, ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον εἶνα (Metaphysics, Book XIII, 1080b.20).

Given such a necessary distinction - and the discussion regarding ἀριθμός and Pythagoras in Book XIII, 1083b.10 et seq - as well as the fact that what ἀριθμός means here, in this tractate, and what it implies - such as the mathematical numbers 2 and 3 developing from the One - is not mentioned, I have transliterated ἀριθμός thus leaving open what it may or may not mean in relation to the particular weltanschauung being described. However, the context seems to suggest a metaphysical rather than an abstract mathematical notion, especially given what follows at the beginning of section 11: πᾶν δὲ τὸ γεννώμενον ἀτελὲς καὶ διαιρετόν.

begetting/begotten. It is interesting to compare the use here of γεννάω (beget/engender) with the use of γέννημα in Poemandres 8 (the birth of Psyche) and 30 (of Logos breeding nobility).

11.

resurgence [...] decline. The sense here, in context, is not as abstract, as impersonal, as a translation such as "increase and decrease" implies. Rather it suggests "resurgence and decline", as happens with living things.

what is complete. The reference is to the Monas.

eikon of theos. I have transliterated εἰκὼν as eikon since - for reasons mentioned in my commentary on Poemandres 31 - it implies more, in some ancient mystical tractates, than what the word 'image' now denotes.

eyes of your heart. A similar expression occurs in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians - πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας <ὑμῶν> (1.18) - although, as some scholars have noted (qv. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, Baker Academic, 2002. p.260f) the Greek syntax there is problematic.

the path to what is above. That is, the anados (ἄνοδος) mentioned in the Poemandres tractate, composed as the word ἄνοδος is from ἀνά (above) and ὁδός (path), the two Greek words used here.

the seeing of it is uniquely your own. What is being conveyed is that the eikon is of itself mystical - not an ordinary image or painting - and can impart to the

person, who "with the eyes of their heart" views it, something unique, personal, numinous.

lodestone. μαγνῆτις λίθος. Lodestone, and not a 'magnet' in the modern sense.

῾Οτι ἐν μόνῳ θεῷ τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἀλλαχόθι δὲ οὐδαμοῦ.

That In The Theos Alone Is Nobility And Not Anywhere Else

Tractate VI

°°°

Introduction

The sixth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, concentrating as it does on τὸ ἀγαθὸν in relation to theos and mortals, is - in respect of the milieu of ancient Greco-Roman culture - metaphysically interesting even though existing translations, given that they invariably translate τὸ ἀγαθὸν as 'the good' and θεός as 'god', impart "the sense of reading somewhat declamatory sermons about god/God and 'the good' familiar from over a thousand years of persons preaching about Christianity." [1]

Since, for reasons explained elsewhere [1], I translate τὸ ἀγαθὸν as 'the noble' - implying nobility, honour, as expressed for example by Seneca, summum bonum est quod honestum est; et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt [2] - and also transliterate θεός as theos, then what emerges from this tractate is something redolent of Greco-Roman mysticism and thus of how τὸ ἀγαθὸν was understood by learned men such as Cicero: in terms of personal character [3] rather than as an impersonal moral abstraction leading as such an abstraction invariably does to dogmatic interpretations and thence to disputations and dissent and thence to the accusations of religious 'heresy' that bedevilled Christian churches for centuries, redolent as such moral abstractions, such dogmatism and accusations, are of an ethos that is rather un-Hellenic.

Such an understanding of τὸ ἀγαθὸν is evident in a passage in section nine of the fourth tractate:

> τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαινόμενα τέρπει, τὰ δὲ ἀφανῆ δυσπιστεῖν ποιεῖ. φανερώτερα δέ ἐστι τὰ κακά, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανεροῖς.
>
> What is apparent can please us while what is concealed can cause doubt with what is bad often overt while the honourable is often concealed having as it has neither pattern nor guise.

For what is expressed in that fourth tractate is that while what is bad is often outwardly obvious (as in the case of a rotten tree or a bad person) what is good, honourable, is often being concealed because it has no guise, no particular, discernable, pattern - no outward sign or appearance - becoming revealed only though noble, honourable, personal, deeds.

In respect of tractate six, the choice of τὸ ἀγαθὸν as 'the noble' (instead of the conventional 'the good') and κακός as 'bad' (instead of the conventional 'evil') elevates the text from a type of pious sermon to a metaphysical weltanschauung, something especially evident at the beginning of section three:

> In mortals, the noble are arrayed to compare with the bad, for in this place those not especially bad are the noble given that in this place nobility has the smallest portion of the bad.
>
> ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ κατὰ σύγκρισιν τὸ ἀγαθὸν τοῦ κακοῦ τέτακται τὸ γὰρ μὴ λίαν κακόν ἐνθάδε τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστι τὸ δὲ ἐνθάδε ἀγαθόν μόριον τοῦ κακοῦ τὸ ἐλάχιστον

Also, while the language of this sixth tractate is on occasions somewhat convoluted and apparently contradictory - as for example in the description in section two of Kosmos having nobility (τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἀγαθὸς ὁ κόσμος καθὰ καὶ αὐτὸς πάντα ποιεῖ) and yet being not noble in other ways (ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσιν οὐκ ἀγαθός) what is expressed metaphysically differs somewhat from some other tractates, revealing just how diverse the pagan mystical traditions represented in the Corpus Hermeticum are.

Despite the differences, most obvious when this tractate - with its rather negative portrayal of mortals and the insistence that beauty and nobility cannot be found in this world - is compared to the Poemandres tractate and the third (Ιερός Λόγος) tractate, what emerges is a hermetic weltanschauung and one that can best be summarized by the following lines from the last two sections:

> "[an] apprehension of theos [is] an apprehension of the beautiful and of the noble... [and] a quest for theos is a quest for the beautiful, and there is only one path there: an awareness of the numinous combined with knowledge [...]

> Yet those who do not apprehend, who do not follow the path of awareness of the numinous, have the effrontery to declare that mortals are beautiful and noble even though they have not observed, and have no semblance of, what the noble is."

This goes some way toward resolving the apparently contradictory nature of the text, asserting as it does at the beginning that "the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone" and yet also asserting toward the end not only that "if you are able to apprehend theos you can apprehend the beautiful and the noble." This is the ethos of a contemplative pagan, and a cultured, mysticism that seems to have been much neglected.

Notes

[1] Myatt, David. *Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum*.

[2] Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, LXXI, 4.

[3] In *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum,* Marcus Tullius Cicero, in criticizing Epicurus and others, presents his view of Summum Bonum: that honestum (honourable conduct) is its foundation and that it can be discerned by careful consideration (ratio) in conjunction with that knowing (scientia) of what is divine and what is mortal that has been described as wisdom (sapientia).

> aequam igitur pronuntiabit sententiam ratio adhibita primum divinarum humanarumque rerum scientia, quae potest appellari rite sapientia, deinde adiunctis virtutibus, quas ratio rerum omnium dominas, tu voluptatum satellites et ministras esse voluisti. (II, 37)

He then writes that honestum does not depend on any personal benefit (omni utilitate) that may result or be expected but instead can be discerned by means of consensus among the whole community in combination with the example afforded by the honourable actions and motives of the finest of individuals.

> Honestum igitur id intellegimus, quod tale est, ut detracta omni utilitate sine ullis praemiis fructibusve per se ipsum possit iure laudari. quod quale sit, non tam definitione, qua sum usus, intellegi potest, quamquam aliquantum potest, quam communi omnium iudicio et optimi cuiusque studiis atque factis, qui permulta ob eam unam causam faciunt, quia decet, quia rectum, quia honestum est, etsi nullum consecuturum emolumentum vident. (II, 45f)

In effect, Summum Bonum - what the Greeks termed τὸ ἀγαθὸν - depends on certain personal qualities such as a careful consideration of a matter; on a personal knowing of what is divine and what is mortal; on the example of personal noble deeds and motives, and on a communal consensus.

There is therefore nothing morally abstract or dogmatic about Cicero's understanding of Summum Bonum which so well expresses, as does Seneca, the

Greco-Roman view, with a perhaps more apt translation of the term Summum Bonum thus being "the highest nobility."

Translation

[1] Asclepius, the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone; indeed, theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. If so, then it can only be the quidditas of all changement and of geniture since nothing is deserted by it but has about itself a stability of vigour, neither excessive nor lacking, a replenishable provider, there at the origin of all things. When saying the provider to all-things is noble, that nobility always exists, an attribute of theos alone and of no one else.

He is not in need of anything since for him to desire something would be bad. Nothing that has come into being is lost to him, for such loss would be vexing with vexation a division of badness. Nothing is superior to him so as to be an enemy, nor is there a partner who might harm him through him having a passionate desire. Nor any-thing so unheeding of him that he becomes enraged; nor anyone of better judgement to be jealous of.

[2] Because none of those have being in his quidditas then only nobility is left, and since nothing of what is bad is in that quidditas then nothing of what is noble will be found in those other things, since, in all others be they big or small, those things exist, in each of them and also in that living being which is bigger and mightier than them all. For what is begotten is replete with physicality with breeding itself being physical. Yet where physicality is, nobility is not, and where nobility is there is no physicality just as when there is night there is no day. It is impracticable regarding breeding for nobility to be there for that is only of what is not begotten.

But as substance has been assigned to partake of all being so it does of nobility which is how Kosmos has nobility because of the construction done regarding all things, even though not noble in other ways since there is physicality, and changement: the construction of the physical.

[3] In mortals, the noble are arrayed to compare with the bad, for in this place those not especially bad are the noble given that in this place nobility has the smallest portion of the bad. But it is impractical in this place to refine the noble from the bad, for in this place the noble deteriorate and, deteriorating, become

rotten and no longer noble. Thus the noble is of theos alone or rather it is theos who is the noble one.

Thus it is, Asclepius, that among mortals they are noble in name only and not in the matter itself for that would be impracticable since the physical body cannot hold on to it, restrained on all sides as it is by badness, by toil, by grief, by desire, by rage, by dishonesty, and by unreasonable opinions; and, Asclepius, most ignoble of all, in this place each such thing is believed to be most noble even though unsurpassably bad.

The mistake, the patron of all things rotten, is the absence in this place of nobility.

[4] For myself, I am beholden to theos who has directed my perceiveration toward a knowing of nobility; that it is impracticable for it to be in this world replete as it is with badness just as it is with the nobility of theos or as theos is with nobility.

For the eminence of the beautiful is around that quidditas so perhaps revealing that quiddity as certainly unmixed and most refined, and I venture to say, Asclepius, that the quidditas of theos - if he has quidditas - is the beautiful and yet the beautiful and the noble cannot be discerned in the things of the world for everything exposed to the eye are as tenuous depictions, and what is not exposed to it, particularly the beautiful and the noble <...> and since the eye is unable to perceive theos so it is with the beautiful and the noble. For they are intrinsically part of theos, of him alone, belonging to him, unseverable, most fair; loved by theos or by those who love theos.

[5] If you are able to apprehend theos you can apprehend the beautiful and the noble, the exceptionally radiant, but a radiance surpassed by theos, and with that beauty unequalled with the noble defying imitation, as it is with theos. Such is the apprehension of theos, and thus is there an apprehension of the beautiful and of the noble, and since they are inseparable from theos they cannot be shared among other living beings. Thus a quest for theos is a quest for the beautiful, and there is only one path there: an awareness of the numinous combined with knowledge.

[6] Yet those who do not apprehend, who do not follow the path of awareness of the numinous, have the effrontery to declare that mortals are beautiful and noble even though they have not observed, and have no semblance of, what the noble is. Believing that what is bad is noble, they are subsumed by every badness and, thus glutted with it, are fearful of being robbed of it so that they in whatever way fight to not only keep it but to increase it.

Such are, Asclepius, for mortals the beautiful and the noble and from which we are unable to flee or despise. But what is most grievous to bear is that we are unable to live without them.

°°°

Commentary

Title.

῞Οτι ἐν μόνῳ θεῷ τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἀλλαχόθι δὲ οὐδαμοῦ. That In The Theos Alone Is Nobility And Not Anywhere Else.

The consensus is that the title is not original and was added by some scribe.

1.

The noble. τὸ ἀγαθὸν. As mentioned in the Introduction, I translate ἀγαθός not as some abstract (impersonal) and disputable 'good' but as, and according to context, nobility, noble, honourable.

no-thing. In respect of ἐν οὐδενί ἐστιν I have here (and occasionally elsewhere) used 'no-thing' - "no entity of any kind" - instead of 'nothing' or 'naught' to emphasize the ontological nature of what is expressed. In addition, as often in the Corpus Hermeticum, what is transliterated here as 'theos' - and by others translated as 'god' - can be taken literally to refer to 'the theos', 'the deity'.

...theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. The suggestion of the first sentence seems to be that 'the theos' is the origin of what is noble, and thus the origin of nobility, and that only through and because of theos can what is noble be presenced and recognized for what it is, and often recognized by those who are, or that which is, an eikon of theos. Hence why in tractate IV it is said that "the eikon will guide you,"; why in tractate XI that "Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos [the eikon] of Aion, the Sun [the eikon] of Aion, and the Sun [the eikon] of mortals," and why in the same tractate it is said that "there is nothing that cannot be an eikon of theos," and why in Poemandres 31 theos is said to "engender all physis as eikon."

then it... Referring to "what is noble".

quidditas. οὐσία. Here, a more appropriate translation of οὐσία - instead of 'essence' or 'substance' - is quidditas, as in tractate XI:2: "it is as if the quidditas of theos is actuality, honour, the beautiful..."

As I noted in my commentary on XI:2,

> Quidditas – post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity – is more appropriate here, in respect of οὐσία, than essence, especially as 'essence' now has so many non-philosophical and modern connotations. Quidditas is thus a philosophical term which requires contextual interpretation. In respect of οὐσία, qv. Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α:
>
> ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ᾗ αὐτά: ἡ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσά πως ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ.
>
> Given the foregoing, then principally – and to be exact – physis denotes the quidditas of beings having changement inherent within them; for substantia has been denoted by physis because it embodies this, as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changements predicated on it. For physis is inherent changement either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.

One interpretation of quidditas here is 'the being of that being/entity', with such quidditas often presenced in - and perceived via or as - physis.

changement...geniture. κινήσεως καὶ γενέσεως. cf. tractate XI:2 and my note above regarding οὐσία. As mentioned in my commentary on XI:2, "the unusual English word geniture expresses the meaning of γένεσις here: that which or those whom have their genesis (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else."

nothing that has come into being. In respect of τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν, cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, 191a27f: φασιν οὔτε γίνεσθαι τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν οὔτε φθείρεσθαι, διὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον μὲν εἶναι γίγνεσθαι τὸ γιγνόμενον ἢ ἐξ ὄντος ἢ ἐκ μὴ ὄντος.

lost. ἀπόλλυμι. qv. the title of tractate VIII, and my note regarding it.

bad...badness. κακός, κακίας. As with ἀγαθός not some moral impersonal disputable abstraction - in this case 'evil' - but the personal sense of some-thing or someone being bad, rotten, ignoble.

a partner who might harm him. Literally, "a partner to be harmed by." The exact nature of this partnership is not specified, although the following καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοῦ ἐρασθήσεται indicates a certain scenario. I have omitted the editorial emendation of οὔτε κάλλιον - "nothing is as beautiful."

2.

nothing of what is bad. Reading κακῶν with the MSS and not the emendation ἄλλων.

physicality. Given the context - ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἓν καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ζῴῳ τῷ πάντων μείζονι καὶ δυνατωτάτῳ - here πάθος, παθῶν, παθητῆς suggest a physicality, a physical actuality/occurrence, which the English word 'passion', with its often implicit anthropomorphism, does not quite express.

The author, in these first two sections, is making a distinction between their hermetic concept of theos and other living beings, especially mortals; of theos as detached from all those things - such as physicality, jealousy, anger - which mortals are subject to and with theos as described here is thus not only very different from the vengeful, angry, Jehovah of the Old Testament but also quite similar to, if not in perhaps some manner based on, the Hellenic concept as mentioned by Aristotle:

> ὥστε ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνέργεια, μακαριότητι διαφέρουσα, θεωρητικὴ ἂν εἴη: καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων δὴ ἡ ταύτῃ συγγενεστάτη εὐδαιμονικωτάτη. σημεῖον δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ μετέχειν τὰ λοιπὰ ζῷα εὐδαιμονίας.
> *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book X) 1178b.22
>
> Therefore the activity of theos, excelling others in bliss, is wordless-awareness [θεωρέω] and the nearest thing to that among mortals arises from good-fortune [εὐδαιμονία].

construction. cf. tractate II, ὁ οὖν θεὸς <τὸ> ἀγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα προσηγορία ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ πατρός, πάλιν διὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν πάντων. πατρὸς γὰρ τὸ ποιεῖν. (Thus theos is the noble and the noble is theos, although another title is that of father because the artifex of all being. For it is of a father to construct.)

not noble in other ways. That is, while Kosmos - qv. tractate XI for what or who this Kosmos may be - has nobility by the act of construction, of forming substance into beings, because some of those beings possess physicality then Kosmos unlike theos is not completely noble.

3.

in this place. I incline toward the view that ἐνθάδε here does not refer, as some have conjectured, to "here below" (qv. Plato, Gorgias, 525b: ὅμως δὲ δι᾽ ἀλγηδόνων καὶ ὀδυνῶν γίγνεται αὐτοῖς ἡ ὠφελία καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἅιδου) but rather just to "this place, here."

refine. καθαροῖς. cf. Poemandres 10, and 22. As I noted in my commentary on Poemandres 22:

> Literally [καθαροῖς] means 'physically clean', often in the sense of being in a state of ritual purification: qv. the inscription on one of the ancient tablets (totenpasse) found in Thurii - ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά χθονίων βασίλεια ("in arrivance, purified from the purified, mistress of the chthonic"). Since the English word 'pure' is unsuitable given its connotations - religious, sanctimonious, political, and otherwise - I have opted for the not altogether satisfactory 'refined'.

Here however, the choice of refine seems apposite, given the text:

> ἀδύνατον οὖν τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐνθάδε καθαρεύειν τῆς κακίας
>
> It is impractical in this place to refine the noble from the bad

This makes perfect (and practical) sense, in contrast to the fairly recent, conventional, and somewhat moralistic translation of Copenhaver: "the good cannot be cleansed of vice here below."

Interestingly, the Greek word καθαροῖς formed the basis for the relatively modern (c.1803) English term 'catharsis'.

physical body. cf. Poemandres 24: ἐν τῇ ἀναλύσει τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ὑλικοῦ παραδίδως αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα εἰς ἀλλοίωσιν (the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed).

restrained on all sides. παντόθεν ἐσφιγμένον.

each such thing. This might well be a reference to "restrained on all sides as it is by badness" - to bad things in general - and not to the immediately preceding "toil, grief, desire, rage, dishonesty, and unreasonable opinion."

the patron of all things rotten. I have omitted the very odd reference to "gluttony" - ἡ γαστριμαργία - which follows τὸ μᾶλλον ἀνυπέρβλητον κακόν, as in all probability it is a gloss. Nock, in his text, indicates a lacuna between the following χορηγὸς and ἡ πλάνη.

If the reference to gluttony is not omitted then a possible interpretation of the text would be: "Gluttony is the patron of all things rotten <...> the mistake in this place is the absence of nobility."

4.

or as theos is with nobility. In order to try and express in English something of the meaning of the Greek - and to avoid repeating "replete" (πλήρωμά), which repetition is not in the Greek text - I have slightly amended the word order. Nock indicates a lacuna between ἀγαθὸν τοῦ θεοῦ and αἱ γὰρ ἐξοχαὶ. The

transition between "replete with" and "the beautiful" is certainly abrupt.

For the eminence of the beautiful is around that quidditas. Although the Greek text here is rather obscure and various emendations have been proposed - none of which are entirely satisfactory - the general sense, of the beautiful surrounding or being near to the quidditas (οὐσία) of theos, seems clear.

tenuous depictions. The Greek words εἴδωλον and σκιαγραφία require careful consideration if one is not to read into the text philosophical meanings from other ancient authors which may not be relevant here, as might be the case in respect of εἴδωλον if one chose the word 'image'. In addition, if the English word chosen has other, perhaps more modern, associations then there may well be a 'retrospective re-interpretation' of the text, reading into it a meaning or meanings which also might not be relevant, as might be the case in respect of εἴδωλον if one chose 'phantom' given what that word now often imputes. Hence I have chosen 'tenuous' and 'depiction' respectively.

particularly the beautiful and the noble. Some text is missing in the MSS so that what follows οὐδὲ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν unfortunately remains unknown.

5.

quest. The sense of ζητέω here is more than that of a simple 'inquiry' or an 'asking'. It is to 'seek after' something with an earnest purpose, as in Matthew 2:13 where there is a desire by Herod to seek out and kill the infant Jesus:

> Ἀναχωρησάντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται κατ' ὄναρ τῷ Ἰωσὴφ λέγων· ἐγερθεὶς παράλαβε τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ φεῦγε εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ ἴσθι ἐκεῖ ἕως ἂν εἴπω σοι· μέλλει γὰρ Ἡρῴδης ζητεῖν τὸ παιδίον τοῦ ἀπολέσαι αὐτό.

awareness of the numinous. As I noted in my commentary on Poemandres 22:

> As with ὁσίοις, εὐσεβέω is a difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as reverent, pious - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism. The correct sense is 'aware of the numinous', and thus imbued with that sense of duty, that sense of humility - or rather, an awareness of their human limitations - which makes them appreciate and respect the numinous in whatever form, way, or manner they appreciate, feel, intuit, apprehend, or understand, the numinous, be it in terms of the gods, the god, Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ᾽ Ἐρινύες, God, or whatever. It is this awareness which inclines a person toward 'respectful deeds'.

6.

semblance. Here, ὄναρ suggests 'semblance' rather than 'dream'.

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Appendix

Concerning Personal Pronouns

Regarding the interpretation of ancient texts - of translating an ancient language into English - there is the matter of personal pronouns with the convention being to default to the masculine singular (Man, his, he) even when the gender is not specified but only assumed, as in the matter of θεός in the sixth tractate where unlike some other tractates (such as Poemandres and tractate VIII) the term πατήρ does not occur.

Thus, conventionally defaulting to the masculine singular in sections 12 and 13 of tractate XI of the Corpus Hermeticum - based on the assumption that the MS reading ἄρχων καὶ ἡγέμων [1] and the title πρόδρομος refer to a man - one translates as:

> He creates all things [...] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for theos? If there is anything he has not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - he is incomplete, while if theos is complete and not otiose then he creates all things. [2]
>
> πάντα οὖν αὐτὸς ποιεῖ [...] εἰ γὰρ ἀποδέδεικταί μηδὲν δυνάμενον εἶναι, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ὁ θεός; εἰ γάρ τί ἐστιν ὃ μὴ ποιεῖ, ὃ μὴ θέμις εἰπεῖν, ἀτελής ἐστιν· εἰ δὲ μήτε ἀργός ἐστι, τέλειος δέ, ἄρα πάντα ποιεῖ.

However, if one uses the plural - non-gender specific - "they" as a personal pronoun then one has:

> "They create all things [...] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for theos? If there is anything they have not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - they are incomplete, while if theos is complete and not otiose then they create all things."

Which somewhat changes the meaning and is perhaps confusing for some, although the non-literal alternatives of "the theos" or "the divinity" are rather cumbersome:

> "The divinity creates all things [...] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for the divinity? If there is anything the divinity has not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - the divinity is incomplete, while if the divinity is complete and not otiose then the divinity creates all things."

An alternative would be the neutral if even more cumbersome phrase "that Being":

> "That Being creates all things [...] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for that Being? If there is anything that Being has not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - that Being is incomplete, while if that Being is complete and not otiose then that Being creates all things."

As I noted in my commentary on the phrase ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, given that in that tractate theos is not only referred to using the ancient honorific πατήρ [3] but also described as ἀρρενόθηλυς, as both male and female:

> "here, as often elsewhere, I have gone against convention (grammatical and otherwise) by, where possible, choosing neutral personal pronouns, thus avoiding sentences such as "And he who has self-knowledge..." This sometimes results in using third person plural pronouns - such as 'their' and 'they' - as if they were personal pronouns, or using constructs such as "the one of self-knowledge" or "whoever has self-knowledge". [2]

While I have in my translation here of tractate six used the conventional default of the masculine singular pronoun it might be an interesting exercise for those interested to provide a version using, where appropriate, gender-neutral personal pronouns, which undoubtedly would result in an interpretation of the text quite different from other translations available, my own included.

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[1] Nock - *Corpus Hermeticum*, Third Edition, 1972 - has the emendation ἄρχοντος καὶ ἡγεμόνος.

[2] Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum I, III, IV, VIII, XI*. 2017.

[3] cf. τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων (Epistle of James, I, 17), "the father of phaos". In respect of phaos, qv. Poemandres 4-6; tractate III, 1 (φῶς ἅγιον), and tractate XI, 7.

Ὅτι οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἀπόλλυται
ἀλλὰ τὰς μεταβολὰς ἀπωλείας καὶ θανάτους πλανώμενοι λέγουσιν

That no beings are lost,
despite mortals mistakenly claiming that such transformations are death and a loss.

Tractate VIII

ooo

Introduction

The eighth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, concise as it is, provides an interesting summary of some of the tenets of the Hermetic weltanschauung. As, for example, in the mention of a first being (the primary theos) and of a second being (a theos) who is an eikon (εἰκὼν) of the first, and which first being - theos - is the artisan of all beings; and as, for example, in the mention of mortals having a natural empathy (συμπάθεια) with this eikon, this second being, who is identified as κόσμος, with κόσμος understood here, as in tractate XI, either as a personification, as a divinity, the theos - a deathless living being, ζῷον ἀθάνατον - who is the living cosmic order, or, as in the Poemandres tractate as simply referring in an impersonal manner to 'the cosmic order' itself.

While most other translators have opted here, as in other tractates, to translate κόσμος as cosmos (which English term suggests that the physical universe is meant) I incline toward the view that here - as in tractate XI - a divinity is meant, especially given how κόσμος is described: as "a second theos and a deathless living being," and as an eikon of the primary theos.

There are certain parallels with tractate XI and in which tractate it is stated that "Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos that of Aion, the Sun that of Aion, and mortals that of the Sun. It is said that changement is death since the body disintegrates with life departing to the unperceptible," (section 15) and, in section 14, that "Life is the enosis of perceiverance and psyche, while death is not the loss of what was joined but the end of enosis."

What therefore emerges from this, the eighth, tractate are two things: how we mortals are part of, and connected to, Kosmos and thence - since Kosmos is an eikon - to the first, the primary, theos, and how diverse the Hermetic weltanschauung is in respect of some details while nevertheless retaining an

underlying ethos.

°°°

Translation

[1] It is regarding psyche and the corporeal that, my son, we now must speak: of why psyche is deathless and how its vigour assembles and separates the corporeal. For there is no death of what-is, only an apprehension grounded in the denotatum 'deathless', either through unavailing toil or, by discarding the important part, that what is called deathless is deathful. That is, for the deathful there is a loss. But nothing of the Kosmos is ever lost, for if Kosmos is a second theos and a deathless living being then it is not possible for any portion of such a deathless living being to be lost since all beings of Kosmos are part of Kosmos, as most certainly are mortals, the noetic living being.

[2] In truth, the first is theos; the eternal, unborn. The second was engendered from, nurtured by, that being and rendered deathless and eikon of that being, as by an everlasting father, never-dying because deathless.

For never-dying is unlike everlasting. For that one was not a bringing-into-being by another although if there was a bringing-into-being it was his own bringing-into-being since he is always a bringing-into-being. For the everlasting - because it is everlasting - is all that is, with the father everlasting because of himself while Kosmos became everlasting and deathless because of the father.

[3] And the father endowed such substance as he gathered, extending it all to create something spherical, conferring upon it a particular quality, deathless and of substance everlasting. Having seeded such qualities and replete with semblances, the father enclosed them in the sphere as if in a cavern. His deliberation was to equip with each quality what would follow; to encompass with deathlessness everything corporeal so that substance would not by thelesis be separated from that bringing-together to thereby dissolve into its own disorder.

For when, my son, substance was incorporeal it was disordered even though that was restricted to other smaller qualities, to the kind of increase and decrease that mortals name death.

[4] For such disorder occurs with earthly-living beings, with celestial beings having one order allotted to them by the father from the beginning and maintained from disintegration by the periodicity of each of them, while the periodicity of earthly living beings is of a separation of their bringing together

and of the indissoluble corporeal; that is, of the deathless. Thus there is the loss of those influencing impressions and not the destruction of what is embodied.

[5] Now, as to the third living being, mortals, brought-into-being as eikon of Kosmos and who, because of the deliberations of the father and beyond the other living beings on Earth, have perceiveration and also empathy with the second theos and perception of the first.

For of the one there is apprehension as of the corporeal, while of the other there is an influencing impression as of the incorporeal and as of a noble perceiverance.

Then this life is not lost?

Speak softly, my son, and apprehend who theos is, who Kosmos is, what a deathless living being is, what a dissoluble living being is, and apprehend also that Kosmos is of theos and within theos and that mortals are of Kosmos and within Kosmos and thus that theos is the origin of, encompasses, and constitutes, everything.

°°°

Commentary

Title.

lost. ἀπόλλυμι. Lost, rather than 'destroyed' or 'perished'. They are not 'lost' because beings - entities/things - once brought-into-being - are still emanations of Being, of theos, even if their presencing, their form, is changed, transformed, morphed, as happens for example with those mortals who, via the anados mentioned in the Poemandres tractate, go beyond the seven spheres to, and then beyond, the ogdoadic physis.

1.

corporeal. σῶμα. Here, the context - qv. for example the following τῶν γὰρ οὐρανίων τὰ σώματα μίαν τάξιν ἔχει in section 4 and τοῦ δὲ ἔννοιαν λαμβάνει ὡς ἀσωμάτου καὶ νοῦ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ in section 5 - suggests corporeal rather than a literal body. A subtle distinction, between "of the nature of matter" and a specific type of "physical body". Compare also the fourth tractate: ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ

πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου, τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἄλλῳ τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. qv. Poemandres 14, tractate XI: 2, etcetera.

assembles. σύστασις. cf. Euripides, Andromache, 1088: τοῦθ᾽ ὕποπτον ἦν ἄρ᾽ ἐς δὲ συστάσεις κύκλους τ᾽ ἐχώρει λαὸς οἰκήτωρ θεοῦ.

In Poemandres 10 it is mentioned how "the logos of theos bounded to the fine artisements of Physis and joined with the perceiveration of that artisan." Thus a theme shared by several tractates is how the various 'artisans' of theos - and theos - skillfully craft beings from Being, as in tractate IV, Chaldron or Monas:

> Επειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ ὥστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα
>
> Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos, you should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, as One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

apprehension. νόημα. cf. Poemandres 3, "I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings."

denotatum. For προσηγορία. In this case, the denotatum - the naming - is the word 'deathless'.

or by discarding the important part [...] what is called deathless is deathful. ἢ κατὰ στέρησιν τοῦ πρώτου γράμματος λεγόμενος θάνατος ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀθάνατος. Literally, "by discarding the first letter it is called θάνατος [deathful] instead of ἀθάνατος [deathless].

Regarding τοῦ πρώτου γράμματος, what seems to be implied is that the mortal apprehension of 'deathless' does not include the most important - the correct - apprehension regarding death, which correct apprehension is explained by what follows.

Kosmos. κόσμος. As at Poemandres 7, κόσμος carries with it the suggestion that the cosmos is an ordered structure. However, here I construe κόσμος, as in tractate XI, as a divinity, the theos who is the living, deathless, cosmic order.

the noetic living being. τὸ λογικὸν ζῷον. The word λογικός imputes the sense of both the faculty of speech and the faculty of thought, something well-expressed by Sophocles: φθέγμα καὶ ἀνεμόεν φρόνημα καὶ ἀστυνόμους ὀργὰς ἐδιδάξατο

καὶ δυσαύλων πάγων ὑπαίθρεια καὶ δύσομβρα φεύγειν βέλη παντοπόρος, (Antigone, 355f).

2.

artisan of all beings. In respect of artisan (δημιουργόν) cf. Poemandres 9, and tractate IV: 1. Regarding "of all beings", cf. Poemandres 31, ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων.

eikon. εἰκὼν, qv. Poemandres 21 and 31, and tractate XI:15. Thus the suggestion is that is this eikon represents - presences, manifests - theos, the artisan.

never-dying...everlasting. In order to try and express the dissimilarity between ἀείζωος and ἀίδιος I have translated the former as never-dying (a sense suggested by ἀείζωον ὡς ἀθάνατος) and the latter as everlasting, a dissimilarity that is not immediately apparent from translations such as "the everliving is different from the eternal."

That one. Referring to 'the first' who engendered Kosmos as eikon.

not a bringing-into-being by another ... always a bringing-into-being. The text - with its repetition of ἐγένετο - is somewhat obscure, and various emendations have been proposed, none of which are entirely satisfactory. The sense seems to be of "that one" - the first - always having been, and is, and always will be, "a coming-into-being".

3.

such substance ... particular quality. The text is quite obscure and several emendations have been suggested, with Nock indicating that some text may be missing after τῷ ἑαυτοῦ, although ὑπ' αὐτόν seems reasonable. Any translation - whatever emendation is accepted - is conjectural.

The sphere may refer to Kosmos, cf. Poemandres 9,

> "Theos, the perceiveration, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiveration, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate."

The suggestion might thus be that these seven spheres are themselves enclosed within a sphere, which might explain Poemandres 13-14, "Having fully learned their essence, and having partaken of their physis, he was determined to burst out past the limit of those spheres [and] with full authority over the ordered

cosmos of humans and of beings devoid of logos, he burst through the strength of the spheres to thus reveal to those of downward physis the beautiful image of theos."

substance. ὕλη, qv. Poemandres 19, tractate III:1, tractate XI:3.

create. ποιέω, qv. tractate XI:5

semblances. Does ἰδέα here equate with the concept of 'form' as described by Plato? The consensus is that it does, even though such an assumption imposes a specific philosophical meaning on the text and even though the cosmogonic context - of the living Kosmos as eikon, of Kosmos made deathless by the father, and of theos, the father, conferring upon the sphere a particular quality - does not seem to support such an abstract, definite, concept. Thus, to avoid imposing a very particular meaning on the text, and given that the hermeticism described in this and in the other tractates represent varied weltanschauungen (albeit having a similar underlying ethos) rather than one well-defined philosophy, I have translated not as 'forms' but as semblances.

as if in a cavern. Does this refer to Plato's allegory of the cave, as so many seem to have assumed? Probably not, since - to give just one example - in the Βιβλιοθήκη of Pseudo-Apollodorus - written around the same time as this tractate - ἐν ἄντρῳ refers to a cave, or cavern, in which Maia, one of the seven Pleiades, gave birth to Hermes: Μαῖα μὲν οὖν ἡ πρεσβυτάτη Διὶ συνελθοῦσα ἐν ἄντρῳ τῆς Κυλλήνης Ἑρμῆν τίκτει. οὗτος ἐν σπαργάνοις ἐπὶ τοῦ λίκνου κείμενος.

deliberation. qv. Poemandres 8. As with the preceding *such substance ... particular quality*, the text here is quite obscure, and any translation - whatever emendation is accepted - is conjectural.

thelesis. θέλησις, qv. tractate IV:1. As noted in the commentary there, a transliteration to suggest something more metaphysical than a human type wish or desire. Such as that the physis - the being - of substance (ὕλη) might be such that without the intervention of theos it might naturally dissolve into disorderliness (ἀταξία).

4.

one order allotted to them. That is, celestial beings - those resident in and of the heavens - have a particular order distinct from that of ordinary mortals, but which order mortals can, via an anados such as described in the Poemandres tractate, journey to, discover, and become a part of.

the periodicity of earthly living beings is of a separation of their bringing together and of the indissoluble corporeal. While the periodicity of celestial beings is unchanging and is maintained from disintegration, the periodicity of

mortals is varied and involves the cycle, the separation, of life and death and yet also involves the reality of death not being an end - since what is deathless, the indissoluble part of what is corporeal, cannot suffer from disintegration.

influencing impressions. αἰσθήσεις. qv. Poemandres 22, and my commentary thereon, for what is meant is not simply 'the [bodily] senses' nor what is perceptible to or perceived by the senses but rather those particular impressions, conveyed by the senses, which may influence a person in a particular way.

what is embodied. The indissoluble part of what is apprehended as corporeal.

5.

perceiverance. νοῦς. Not 'mind', qv. Poemandres 2, tractate III:1, etcetera. As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 2:

> I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.
>
> Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action.

empathy. συμπάθεια.

perception. cf. Poemandres 18. An apprehension of the numinous, and thus of theos, of Kosmos as eikon, and so on.

there is an influencing impression as of the incorporeal and of a noble perceiverance. This refers to 'the first', to theos, the father; with the preceding "apprehension as of the corporeal" referring to 'the second', that is, to Kosmos.

Regarding ἀγαθός as 'noble/nobility', qv. my commentary on Poemandres 22. and especially the commentary on φανερώτερα δέ ἐστι τὰ κακά τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανεροῖς in tractate IV:9.

Thus theos is apprehended - understood, felt - in the same, mystical, numinous, way not only as the incorporeal is, but also as inherently noble.

Speak softly. εὐφήμησον. qv tractate XI:22.

(Kosmos is ...) within theos. ἐν τῷ θεῷ. Literally, 'within the theos'.

Νοῦς πρὸς Ἑρμῆν

From Perceiverance To Hermes

Tractate XI

The eleventh tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, the cosmogony in which Aion, Kronos, and Sophia feature. Second, possible links to the Poemandres tractate, given - for example - the mention of a septenary system and the supposition that Perceiverance - νοῦς - who addresses Hermes Trismegistus may well be Poemandres himself.

As with my translations of tractates I, III, and IV of the Corpus Hermeticum, I here transliterate certain Greek words, such as theos, in order to avoid what I have described as 'retrospective re-interpretation'.

°°°

Translation

[1] Take account of this discourse, Hermes Trismegistus, remembering what is said for I shall not refrain from mentioning what occurs to me.

Because there is much difference among the many who speak about theos and all other things, I have not uncovered the actuality. Therefore, my Lord, make it unambiguous for me, for you are the one I trust in this.

[2] Hear then, my son, of theos and of everything: theos, Aion, Kronos, Kosmos, geniture. Theos brought Aion into being; Aion: Kosmos; Kosmos, Kronos; Kronos, geniture. It is as if the quidditas of theos is actuality, honour, the beautiful, good fortune, Sophia. Of Aion, identity; of Kosmos, arrangement; of Kronos, variation; of geniture, Life and Death.

The vigour of theos is perceiveration and Psyche; but of Aion: continuance and exemption from death; of Kosmos, a cyclic return and renewal; of Kronos, growth and abatement; of geniture, capability. Aion, thus, is of theos; Kosmos of Aion; Kronos of Kosmos; and geniture of Kronos.

[3] The foundation of all being is theos; of their quidditas, Aion; of their substance, Kosmos. The craft of theos: Aion; the work of Aion: Kosmos, which is not just a coming-into-being but always is, from Aion. Thus it cannot be destroyed since Aion is not destroyable nor will Kosmos cease to be since Aion surrounds it.

But the Sophia of theos is what?

The noble, the beautiful, good fortune, arête, and Aion. From Aion to Kosmos: exemption from death, and continuance of substance.

[4] For that geniture depends on Aion just as Aion does on theos. Geniture and Kronos - in the heavens and on Earth - are jumelle; in the heavens, unchanging and undecaying; yet on Earth, changeable and decayable.

Theos is the psyche of Aion; Aion that of Kosmos; the heavens that of the Earth. Theos is presenced in perceiveration, with perceiveration presenced in psyche, and psyche in substance, with all of this through Aion, with the whole body, in which are all the bodies, replete with psyche with psyche replete with perceiveration and with theos. Above in the heavens the identity is unchanged while on Earth there is changement coming-into-being

[5] Aion maintains this, through necessitas or through foreseeing or through physis, or through whatever other assumption we assume, for all this is the activity of theos. For the activity of theos is an unsurpassable crafting that no one can liken to anything mortal or divine.

Therefore, Hermes, never presume that what is above or below is similar to theos since you will descend down from actuality. For nothing is similar to that which, as the one and only, has no similitude. Never presume that he would delegate his work to someone else, for who else is the cause of life, of exemption from death, of Changement? What else but create?

Theos is not inactive for otherwise everything would be inactive; instead they are replete with theos, and there is nowhere in the cosmos nor anywhere else where there is inaction. Inactive is thus a vacant nomen in regard to a creator and what is brought into being.

[6] For every being there is a coming-into-being, each one in balance with its place, with the creator in all that exists, not found in just some nor creating only some but everything. His craft is in what he creates so that their coming-into

being is not independent of him but rather comes-into-being because of him.

°°°

Correctly consider and observe Kosmos as suggested by me and thus the beauty thereof, a body undecayable and nothing more eldern and yet always vigorous and fresh, even more now than before.

[7] Observe also the septenary cosmos ordered in arrangement by Aion with its separate aeonic orbits. Everything replete with phaos but with no Fire anywhere. For fellowship, and the melding of opposites and the dissimilar, produced phaos
shining forth in the activity of theos, progenitor of all that is honourable, archon and hegemon of the septenary cosmos.

The Moon, prodomus of all of those, an instrument of Physis, of the changement of the substance below - with the Earth amid them all, a settled foundation of the beautiful Kosmos - and nourisher and nurturer of those on Earth.

Consider also the numerous deathless, and just how many, as well as deathful lives there are. And amid both the deathless and the deathful, the travelling Moon.

[8] All are replete with psyche, all in motion, some around the heavens with others around the Earth, with those on the right not toward to the left and those on the left not toward the right, not those above to below nor below to above. That all have come-into-being you do not, dear Hermes, have to learn from me, for they have bodies, psyche, motion, and to meld them into one is not possible without someone to bring them together. Such a one must exist and be, in every way, a unity.

[9] For, given dissimilar objects, motion is different and diverse with one hastiness appointed to them all, and thus it is not possible for there to be two or more creators for if there are many then such an arrangement cannot be kept. For the result of many is strifeful emulation of the stronger, and if one of two was the creator of changeable mortal living beings they would covet creating deathless ones even as the creator of the deathless would deathful ones.

If indeed there were two with one substance and the other psyche who would provide the creations? If both of them, which would have the larger part?

[10] Consider that every living being, deathful and deathless, and whether devoid of logos, is formed of substance and psyche, for all living beings presence life while the non-living are substance only. Similarly, psyche of itself from its creator is the cause of the living while the cause of all life is the creator of deathless beings.

What then of the living that die and the deathless ones? For why does the deathless one who creates deathless beings not create other living beings so?

[11] It is evident someone is so creating and that he is One; for Psyche is one, Life is one, Substance is one.

But who is it?

Who could it be if not One, the theos? To whom if not to theos alone would it belong to presence life in living beings?
Theos therefore is One, for having accepted the Kosmos is one, the Sun is one, the Moon is one, and divinity-presenced is one, could you maintain that theos is some other number?

[12] He creates all beings, and how supreme it is for the theos to create life and psyche and the deathless and changement, with you doing so many things, for you see, hear, speak, smell, touch, walk, perceive, and breathe. Yet it is not someone else who is seeing and another who is hearing and another who is speaking and another who is touching and another who is hearing and another who is smelling and another who is walking and another who is perceiving and another who is breathing, but one being doing all such things.

None of which are separate from theos. Just as you are not really living if you are otiose so would theos, if otiose - and it is not the custom to say this - no longer be theos.

[13] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for theos? If there is anything he has not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - he is incomplete, while if theos is complete and not otiose then he creates all things.

For a little longer, Hermes, give way to me and you will more readily apprehend that the work of theos is one: of everything brought-into-being; what is coming-into-being, what has come-into-being, and what will come-into-being. This, my friend, is Life; this is the beautiful, this is the noble; this is the theos.

[14] If you maintain this should be apprehended in deeds, consider when you seek to procreate, for it not the same for him since there is no delight, no colleague. Instead, a working alone, and forever working for he is what he creates. If ever isolated from it, everything would - because of Necessitas - fall apart, with everything dying because there would be no Life. But if everything is alive, and Life is One, then theos is One. While if everything is alive, and Life is One, then theos is One. Also, if everything is alive both in the heavens and on Earth and Life is One for them all as brought-into-being by theos and theos is that, then all are brought-into-being by theos.

Life is the enosis of perceiverance and psyche, while death is not the loss of

what was joined but the end of enosis.

[15] Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos that of Aion, the Sun that of Aion, and mortals that of the Sun. It is said that changement is death since the body disintegrates with life departing to the unperceptible. My dear Hermes, while I state there is changement in Kosmos because every day portions of it come-into-being in the unperceptible, it never disintegrates. These are the occurrences of the Kosmos, cyclicity and occultations; the cyclic a turning and occultation renewal.

[16] The Kosmos is polymorphous and forms are not imposed on it but rather, within itself, it is such changement. Since the Kosmos is polymorphous who created it and who would that be? Whomsoever cannot be without-form and yet if polymorphous would be akin to Kosmos and if only one form would be lower than Kosmos.

What therefore can be said without confusion given that there should be no confusion concerning apprehending theos? If there is a kind then it is a singular kind, incorporeal, and not subject to perception but revealed through the corporeal.

[17] And do not wonder about an incorporeal kind since it is akin to words, mountains which appear in depictions to be rugged but which when examined are flat and smooth. So heed these words of mine bold as they are but honest, for as mortals cannot be separate from Life, theos cannot be separate from creating nobility since for theos this creating is Life and motion, the movement of everything and the giving of life.

[18] Some of the matters spoken of require a certain apprehension, so consider what I say: everything is in the theos but not as if lying in a particular place - since the place is a body and also immovable and what is lain does not move - but an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise.

Thus apprehend what embraces everything and apprehend that the incorporeal has no boundary, that nothing is swifter, nothing as mighty, since the incorporeal is boundless, the swiftest, the mightiest.

[19] And apprehend this about yourself and so urge your psyche to go to any land and, swifter than that urging, it will be there. Likewise, urge it to go to the Ocean and again it will be swiftly there without passing from place to place but as if already there.

Urge it to go up into the heavens and it will be there without the need of any wings. Indeed, nothing will impede it: not the fire of the Sun nor Aether, nor the vortex, nor the bodies of the other stars, but - carving through them all - it will go as far as the furthest body. Should you desire to burst through The Entirety and observe what is beyond - if indeed there be anything beyond that ordered

system - then it is possible for you.

[20] Thus see how much might and swiftness you have. If you can do all those things then cannot theos? In such a manner you should consider theos as having all - Kosmos, The Entirety - as purposes within himself. For until you compare yourself with theos you cannot apprehend theos because what is similar can understand the similar.

Extend yourself greatly, immeasurably; leap beyond every body, surpass Kronos, become Aion, and you can apprehend theos. Having supposed that for you there is nothing that is not possible, regard yourself as deathless, capable of apprehending everything: every craft, all learning, the nature of every living being. Become elevated above every elevation, deeper than every depth. Gather within yourself awareness of every creation; of Fire and Water; the Dry and the Moist; and jointly be at all places on land, at sea, in the heavens. Be not yet born; in the womb; young; old; having died; what is beyond death.

And if you apprehend all that together - durations, places, occurrences, quality, quantity - you will be capable of apprehending theos.

[21] But if you enclose your psyche in your body and lessen it, saying "I comprehend nothing; have no power; fear the sea; am unable to go up into the heavens; do not know who I was and cannot know what I will be," then what is there with you and also with the god?

For, indulging the body and rotten, you are unable to apprehend the beautiful, the noble. To be completely rotten is to be unaware of the numinous, while having the ability to discover, to have volition, to have expectations, is the direct, the better - its own - way to nobility, and which you will encounter everywhere and which will everywhere be perceived whether you anticipate it or not: awake, asleep, at sea; whether journeying by night, by day, when speaking or when silent. For there is nothing that cannot be an eikon of theos.

[22] Do you affirm that theos is unperceived?

Speak softly. Who is more clearly revealed? He created everything such that in them you might discern him, for such is the nobility, such is the arête, of the theos, that he is revealed in everything. For nothing is unperceivable, not even the incorporeal, with perceiveration evident through apprehension, theos through creation.

So Trismegistus, let what has been revealed so far be apprehended by you, and if you consider other things in the same way you will not be deceived.

°°°

Commentary

Title.

perceiverance. νοῦς. qv. my commentary on the term in Poemandres where I wrote:

> "The conventional interpretation [of νοῦς] is 'mind', as if in contrast to 'the body' and/or as if some fixed philosophical and abstract principle is meant or implied.
>
> This conventional interpretation is in my view incorrect, being another example of not only retrospective reinterpretation but of using a word which has acquired, over the past thousand years or more, certain meanings which detract from an understanding of the original text. Retrospective reinterpretation because the assumption is that what is being described is an axiomatic, reasoned, philosophy centred on ideations such as Thought, Mind, and Logos, rather than what it is: an attempt to describe, in fallible words, a personal intuition about our existence, our human nature, and which intuition is said to emanate from a supernatural being named Pœmandres [...]
>
> I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.
>
> Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action."

1.

The first paragraph of this section is spoken by Perceiverance [Noῦς], the second by Hermes Trismegistus.

theos. As with my translations of tractates I, III, and IV of the Corpus

Hermeticum, I here transliterate θεός rather than translate as God (as most others do) which translation in my opinion imposes a particular and Christian interpretation on the text given two thousand years of Christian exegesis regarding both God and the Old and New Testaments. A suitable alternative to 'theos' might be 'the god', which emphasizes that the theos described in this tractate is, like Zeus in classical times, the pre-eminent divinity. Occasionally, when the text warrants it - for example τῷ θεῷ and εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός - I have used 'the theos' instead of theos.

I have not uncovered the actuality. ἐγὼ τὸ ἀληθὲς οὐκ ἔμαθον. I incline toward the view that the sense of ἀληθής here is not some abstract (disputable) 'truth' but rather of the reality, the actuality, beyond the conflicting views, beyond appearance, and thus of uncovering - of learning - the reality of theos and other things.

2.

Aion. αἰών. A transliteration since the usual translation of 'eternity' imposes modern (cosmological and theological) meanings on the text, especially as αἰών can also imply a personification of a 'divine being', and 'an age or era' of long duration, or the lifespan of a mortal (as in Herodotus: πρὶν τελευτήσαντα καλῶς τὸν αἰῶνα πύθωμαι, Book 1, 32.5). In Aristotle, αἰών has specific meanings which the English term 'eternity' does not describe. For instance, in Περί Ουρανού where he writes: Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὔτε γέγονεν ὁ πᾶς οὐρανὸς οὔτ' ἐνδέχεται φθαρῆναι, καθάπερ τινές φασιν αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἔστιν εἷς καὶ ἀΐδιος, ἀρχὴν μὲν καὶ τελευτὴν οὐκ ἔχων τοῦ παντὸς αἰῶνος, ἔχων δὲ καὶ περιέχων ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν ἄπειρον χρόνον (Book 2, 1).

Which is somewhat echoed in this tractate in respect of Kosmos which is not just a coming-into-being but always just *is*, from Aion (γενόμενος οὔποτε καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος).

Interestingly, Jung used the term to describe a particular archetype, one which provides "intimations of a kind of enantiodromian reversal of dominants" as he writes in his *Aion: Researches Into The Phenomenology Of The Self*.

In addition, αἰών - as with the following χρόνος - might well be a personification, or an esoteric/philosophical term or principle which requires interpretation, as might κόσμος (Kosmos). Since κόσμος here does not necessarily imply what we now understand, via sciences such as astronomy, as the physical cosmos/universe it seems inappropriate to translate it as 'the cosmos', especially given expressions such as οὐδὲ ἀπολεῖταί τι τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τοῦ κόσμου ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐμπεριεχομένου.

Kronos. χρόνος. For reasons I have explained many times in my writings (for instance in Appendix I), I do not translate χρόνος as 'time', which translation seems to me to impose a particular modern meaning on the text given that for

centuries the term 'time' has denoted a certain regularity (hours, minutes) measured by a mechanism such as a clock and given that the term 'duration' is usually more appropriate in relation to ancient Greek texts where the duration between, for example, the season of Summer and the season of Autumn was determined by the observations (the appearance in the night sky) of certain constellations and stars.

geniture. γένεσις. The unusual English word geniture expresses the meaning of γένεσις here: that which or those whom have their genesis (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else. Alongside χρόνος, αἰών, and κόσμος, here γένεσις could well be a personification.

It is as if the quidditas of theos is [...] τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ ὥσπερ οὐσία ἐστὶ... Quidditas – post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity – is more appropriate here, in respect of οὐσία, than essence, especially as 'essence' now has so many non-philosophical and modern connotations. Quidditas is thus a philosophical term which requires contextual interpretation. In respect of οὐσία, qv. Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015a: ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ᾗ αὐτά: ἡ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσά πως ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ. [Given the foregoing, then principally – and to be exact – physis denotes the quidditas of beings having changement inherent within them; for substantia has been denoted by physis because it embodies this, as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changements predicated on it. For physis is inherent changement either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.]

In addition, I follow the MSS, which have τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ καλόν, ἡ εὐδαιμονία.

honour. ἀγαθός. That is, the substance of theos - in mortals - is manifest in the brave, in nobility of character, in what being noble means. Regarding ἀγαθός as honour rather than some abstract, disputable 'good', qv. my commentary (i) on Poemandres 22 and (ii) on τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαινόμενα τέρπει [...] φανεροῖς in section 9 of Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς (tractate IV), and (iii) Appendix II and III.

good fortune. εὐδαιμονία.

Sophia. σοφία. A transliteration, because - just like ἀληθής - it is not necessarily here something abstract, something disputable, such as 'wisdom' or 'good judgement'. Just as with Aion and Kronos, it might be a personification or used here as an esoteric term which thus requires contextual interpretation.

identity...arrangement. ταὐτότης...τάξις. An alternative for 'identity' would be

'form' (but not necessarily in the sense used by Plato and Aristotle) for the meaning seems to be that Aion provides the form, the identity, of beings with Kosmos arranging these forms into a particular order.

of Kronos, variation. See the note on Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α, above.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. As at Poemandres 14, not 'energy' given that the word energy has too many modern connotations and thus distracts from the meaning here. See also the note on 'activity' in section 5 where 'activity' is a more perspicacious translation.

cyclic return and renewal. ἀποκατάστασις καὶ ἀνταποκατάστασις. I take this expression as implying something metaphysical rather than astronomical; an astronomical meaning as described, for example, in the Greek fragments of a book on astrology by Dorotheus of Sidon (qv. *Dorothei Sidonii carmen astrologicum. Interpretationem Arabicam in linguam Anglicam versam una cum Dorothei fragmentis et Graecis et Latinis*, edited by Pingree, Teubner, Leipzig, 1976).

For there is a similar metaphysical theme in Poemandres 17 - μέχρι περιόδου τέλους (cyclic until its completion) - with apokatastasis becoming (possibly as an echo of Greek Stoicism) a part of early Christian exegesis as exemplified by Gregory of Nyssa who wrote ἀνάστασίς ἐστιν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἀποκατάστασις (De Anima et Resurrectione, 156C) where apokatastasis implies a return to, a resurrection of, the former state of being (physis) of mortals lost through 'original sin' and in respect of which returning baptism is a beginning.

3.

substance. ὕλη. qv. Poemandres 10. Given that the ancient Greek term does not exactly mean 'matter' in the modern sense (as in the science of Physics) it is better to find an alternative. Hence substance, the materia of 'things' and living beings. Thus 'materia' would be another suitable translation here of ὕλη.

The craft of theos: Aion. δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών. Aion as artisan who has, through theos, the power to not only craft Kosmos but also renew it, for Kosmos was/is not just a once occurring coming-into-being but is forever renewed: γενόμενος οὔποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνο.

On δύναμις as implying an 'artisan-creator' rather than just the 'power/strength' of a divinity, qv. the doxology in Poemandres 31.

From Aion to Kosmos. The suggestion is that 'the cosmic order' - Kosmos - is the work of Aion who/which is the source of, provides, 'the exemption from death' and the continuance of materia/substantia, the cyclic return and renewal.

4.

jumelle. διπλοῦς. As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 14, "The much underused and descriptive English word jumelle - from the Latin gemellus - describes some-thing made in, or composed of, two parts, and is therefore most suitable here, more so than common words such as 'double' or twofold."

psyche. ψυχὴ. Avoiding the usual translation of 'soul' which imposes various, disputable, religious and philosophical meanings (including modern ones) on the text. A useful summary of the use of ψυχὴ from classical to Greco-Roman times is given in DeWitt Burton: *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918).

Theos is presenced in perceiveration... The term 'presenced' expresses the esoteric meaning of the text better than something such as "theos is in perceiveration", especially given what follows: a description of the layers of being, of the whole, complete, cosmic, Body having within it other bodies, other layers or types of being, such as Kronos.

Within, it is filled; outside, it is enclosed ... a vast, fully-formed, life. The suggestion is that it - the cosmic Body - is enclosed, encircled, by psyche which fills the cosmos with Life.

It is possible to understand this mystically as an allusion to the difference between what is esoteric and what is exoteric, with 'within' referring to an inner/esoteric perception and understanding, and 'outer' as referring to the exoteric. That is, the exoteric understanding is of something vast, fully-formed, complete, and living (μέγα καὶ τέλειον ζῷον) while the inner understanding is of living beings who, "replete with psyche", are connected to theos through perceiveration. The exoteric perception is also described in the preceding "unchanging and undecaying" aspect of the heavens, with the esoteric referring to the "changeable and decayable" nature of living things on Earth.

5.

Necessitas. Although the Latin 'Necessitas' is a suitable alternative for the Greek, a transliteration (Ananke) is perhaps preferable (although less readable), because even if what is meant is not 'wyrd' - qv. Ἀνάγκης, the primordial goddess of incumbency, of wyrd, of that which is beyond, and the origin of, what we often describe as our Fate as a mortal being [cf. Empedocles, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Diels-Kranz, 31, B115] - English terms such as 'necessity' and 'constraint' are somewhat inadequate, vague, especially given what follows: εἴτε

πρόνοιαν εἴτε φύσιν καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο οἴεται ἢ οἰήσεταί τις.

Thus the term requires contextual interpretation.

physis. φύσις. An important theme/principle in the Poemandres tractate and in Aristotle, and a term which suggests more than what the English terms Nature - and the 'nature' or 'character' of a thing or person - denote. In respect of Aristotle, qv. Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α, quoted above in respect of my use of the term quidditas.

What physis denotes is something ontological: a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being.

activity. For ἐνέργεια here since the term 'energy' is - given its modern and scientific connotations - inappropriate and misleading.

crafting. See the note on δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών above.

descend down. In respect of ἐκπεσῇ, cf. Basil of Caesarea, Epistulae, Γλυκερίῳ: ἐκπεσῇ δὲ καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν μελῶν σου καὶ τῆς στολῆς.

changement. μεταβολή. I have here chosen 'changement' in preference to 'change' since changement (coming into English use around 1584) is more specific than 'change', suggesting variation, alteration, development, unfolding, transmutation.

Inactive is thus a vacant nomen. ἀργία γὰρ ὄνομα κενόν ἐστι. The unusual English word nomen - a direct borrowing from the Latin - is more appropriate than 'word' since nomen can mean a name and also a designation, for what is suggested is that in respect of someone who crafts, creates, things - theos - and what is created, brought-into-being, the designation and the name 'inactive' are not there. A suitable simile might be that of the second personal name (nomen) of a Roman citizen which designated their *gens* and, later, their status. Thus theos has no gens because theos is unique, and the status of theos cannot be compared to that of any other being because the status of theos is also unique.

In respect of ποιέω, I prefer 'create' rather than the somewhat prosaic 'make'.

6.

I am inclined to agree with Scott - *Hermetica*, Volume I, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924, p.210 - that after the end of the first paragraph of section 6 [For every being there is a coming-into-being … not independent of him but rather comes-into-being because of him] the tractate should be divided. Indeed, there might even have been a melding of two different tractates (or two different authors) given the contrast between the first and the second part.

undecayable. ἀκήρατος. That is, a privation of κηραίνω: decay, spoiled, perish. Undecayable is more apt here than 'undefiled' or 'pure' especially as Thomas More, in 1534 in his A Treatise On The Passion, wrote of "the infinite perfection of their undecayable glory."

eldern. For παλαιός. The Middle English forms of eldern include elldern and eldrin, and the etymology is 'elder' plus the suffix 'en'. In comparison to this rather evocative English word, alternatives such as 'ancient' seem somewhat prosaic.

7.

Observe also the septenary cosmos ... separate aeonic orbits. Nock - who as Copenhaver et al - renders αἰών as 'eternity' translates this passage as: Vois aussi la hiérache des sept cieux, formés en bon ordre suivant une disposition éternelle, remplissant, chacun par une différente, l'éternité.

phaos. As in my Poemandres - and for reasons explained there - a transliteration of φῶς, using the Homeric φάος. To translate simply as 'light' obscures the elemental nature of phaos.

no fire anywhere. As in the Poemandres tractate (qv. sections 4, 5, et seq.) not 'fire' in the literal sense but fire as an elemental principle. In the Poemandres tractate - which describes the origins of beings - Fire plays an important role, as at section 17,

> "those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Æther, the pnuema, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceiveration; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion."

fellowship. The meaning of φιλία here is debatable, as usual renderings such as 'love' and 'friendship' seem somewhat inappropriate given the context. It is possible it refers to a principle such as the one suggested by Empedocles where it is the apparent opposite of νεῖκος, qv. the mention of Empedocles by Isocrates (Antidosis, 15.268) - Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ τέτταρα, καὶ νεῖκος καὶ φιλίαν ἐν αὐτοῖς - and fragments such as 31, B35 and 31, B115 (Diels-Kranz: Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker) with νεῖκος implying 'disagreement' and φιλότης something akin to 'fellowship'.

The contrast between νεῖκος and φιλότης is also mentioned - interestingly in regard to the source of motion - by Aristotle in Metaphysics, Book 12, 1072a:

Ἐμπεδοκλῆς φιλίαν καὶ τὸ νεῖκος.

archon and hegemon. I follow the MSS which have ἄρχων καὶ ἡγέμων. Since both ἄρχων and ἡγέμων have been assimilated into the English language (ἄρχων c. 1755 and ἡγέμων c. 1829) and retain their original meaning it seemed unnecessary to translate them.

prodromus. πρόδρομος. Another Greek word assimilated into the English language (c. 1602 and appearing in a translation of Ovid's Salmacis and Hermaphroditus) and which retains the meaning of the Greek here: a forerunner, a precursor; a moving ahead and in front of.

the Earth amid them all. I incline toward the view that τήν τε γῆν μέσην τοῦ παντός does not mean that 'the Earth is at the centre of the universe' (or something similar) - since κόσμος is not directly mentioned - but rather that the Earth is in the midst of - among - all, the whole, (παντός) that exists.

foundation. I take the sense of ὑποστάθμη here to be 'foundation' rather than implying some sort of 'sediment', gross or otherwise.

nurturer. τιθήνη.

deathless, deathful. qv. Poemandres 14: θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. As there, I take the English words from Chapman's *Hymn to Venus* from the Homeric Hymns: "That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man."

travelling. ὑποστάθμη. The context suggests 'travelling', and 'going around or about' in a general sense, rather than 'circling' in some defined astronomical sense.

8.

all in motion. In a passage critical of Plato and in respect of motion, psyche and the heavens, Aristotle in his Metaphysics wrote: τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινοῦν: ὕστερον γὰρ καὶ ἅμα τῷ οὐρανῷ ἡ ψυχή, ὡς φησίν. (Book 12, 1072a)

in every way, a unity. cf. sections 10 and 11 of the Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς tractate (IV) with their mention of μονάς.

hastiness. ταχυτής. To translate as either 'speed' or 'velocity' is to leave the text open to misinterpretation, since the concept of speed/velocity as a measure (precise or otherwise) of the time taken to travel a certain distance was unknown in the ancient world.

10.

devoid of logos. qv. Poemander 10. As there, ἄλογος is simply 'without/devoid of or lacking in logos'. It does not necessarily here, or there, imply 'irrational' or 'unreasoning'. It might, for example, be referring to how logos is explained in texts such as Poemandres where distinctions are made between logoi, such as pneumal logos and phaomal logos.

In addition, I follow the MSS which have only καὶ τοῦ ἀλόγου.

presence life. ἔμψυχος. That is, are living; have life; embody, are animated by, life; and thus are not lifelessly cold.

psyche of itself [...] the creator of deathless being. Although the Greek wording is somewhat convoluted the meaning is that while psyche is the "cause of the life" of beings which are animated with life, it is the creator of deathless life who is the cause of all life.

What then of the living that die and the deathless ones? I follow the emendation of Tiedemann who has ἀθάνατῶν in place of θνητῶν.

11.

if not One, the theos. The phrase εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός occurs in Mark 10.18 and Luke 18.19. I have translated literally in an attempt to preserve the meaning, lost if one translates as The One God.

Theos therefore is One. I have omitted the following γελοιότατον - "most absurd" - as a gloss. In respect of 'One' here - εἷς - what is implied is not the numeral one but rather "not composed of separate parts", complete of itself, the opposite of 'many', and so on. That is, an undivided unity.

divinity-presenced. θειότης. This word imputes the sense of 'the divine (made) manifest' or less literally 'divine-ness' whence the usual translation of 'divinity'. I have opted for divinity-presenced to express something of its original meaning and its uncommonality.

12.

He creates all things. I have omitted the following ἐν πολλῷ γελοιότατον as an untranslatable gloss.

otiose. καταργέω. Since otiose implies more than being 'idle' or 'unoccupied' it is apt, implying as it does "having no practical function; redundant; superfluous".

13.

no one really exists without producing... Following the emendations of Nock, who has σε μηδὲν ποιοῦντα μὴ δυνάμενον εἶναι.

apprehend. νοέω. To apprehend also in the sense of 'discover'.

this is Life; this is the beautiful, this is the noble; this is the theos. ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο [...] ζωή, τοῦτο δέ ἐστι τὸ καλόν, τοῦτο δέ ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθόν, τοῦτό ἐστιν ὁ θεός. A succinct expression of the main theme of the tractate and of one of the main themes of the hermetic weltanschauung.

14.

enosis. ἕνωσις. A transliteration given that it is a mystical term with a particular meaning and describes something more than is denoted by the ordinary English word 'union'. It was, for example used by Plotinus, by Maximus of Constantinople, and was part of the mystic philosophy attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius, The Areopagite - qv. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Series Graeca. vol IV, 396A. 1857 - and denoted, for Plotinus, a desirable ascent (ἄνοδος) and a 'merging with The One', and for both the Areopagite and Maximus of Constantinople a self-less mystical experience of God.

15.

eikon. εἰκὼν. Another mystical term requiring contextual interpretation, cf. Poemandres 31, regarding which I wrote in my commentary: "I have transliterated εἰκὼν as here it does not only mean what the English words 'image' or 'likeness' suggest or imply, but rather it is similar to what Maximus of Constantinople in his Mystagogia [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence."

My dear Hermes. Omitting the following δεισιδαίμων ὡς ἀκούεις as a gloss.

occurrences. πάθη. I interpret this not in some anthropomorphic way - as 'passions' - but metaphysically (as akin to πάθημα), and thus as occurrences, events, happenings, that here regularly occur to Kosmos and which change and renew it despite (or perhaps because of) the change it undergoes. cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 1, 982b: οἷον περί τε τῶν τῆς σελήνης παθημάτων καὶ τῶν περὶ τὸν ἥλιον καὶ ἄστρα καὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς γενέσεως.

the cyclic a turning. The meaning here of στροφή is problematic. Given the context, my suggestion is 'turning' in the sense of a change that is positive and

possibility evolutionary, as πάθη can lead to positive change, in humans, in Nature, and in things.

16.

polymorphous. παντόμορφος. As for the rest of the sentence, vis-a-vis 'form', there is no adequate, unambiguous, word to re-present μορφή given how, for example, the English term 'morph' has acquired various meanings irrelevant here and given that the English term 'form' has associations with Plato when used to translate ἰδέα.

without-form. ἄμορφος.

kind. For ἰδέα. To avoid confusion with 'form' and because it is apposite here.

17.

incorporeal kind. In respect of ἀσώματος, cf. the comment about Socrates and Plato in Placita Philosophorum by Pseudo-Plutarch: τὸν θεὸν τὴν ὕλην τὴν ἰδέαν. ὁ δὲ θεὸς νοῦς ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου, ὕλη δὲ τὸ ὑποκείμενον πρῶτον γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ, ἰδέα δ᾽ οὐσία ἀσώματος ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ ταῖς φαντασίαις τοῦ θεοῦ. (1.3)

mountains which appear in depictions. I have chosen 'depictions' because depiction could refer to paintings on vases or to wall-paintings or to some other medium or art-form where mountains might be depicted, and it is not clear from the context which is meant.

18.

φαντασίᾳ. Not here simply 'appearance' in the ordinary sense of the term but a 'making visible' such that it is apprehended by us in a particular way, as a re-presentation of what it actually is. Hence: "an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise."

19.

urge your psyche to go to... The whole passage is interesting and evocative, with psyche here signifying 'spirit' as in "let your spirit wander to other places" and thus invoking something akin to what we now might describe as conscious imagination.

go to any land. Following the MSS rather than the emendation Nock accepts which is εἰς Ἰνδικὴν. There seems to me no justification for jarringly introducing India here.

Ocean. Ὠκεανός. That is, a sea beyond the Mediterranean, such as the Atlantic.

Aether. cf. Poemandres 17, ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε, where I noted in my commentary: "It is best to transliterate αἰθήρ - as Æther - given that it, like Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and pnuema, is an elemental principle, or a type of (or a particular) being, or some-thing archetypal."

nor the vortex. οὐχ ἡ δίνη. Presumably δίνη here refers to the celestial movement of the planets and stars as observed from Earth.

burst through. cf. Poemandres 14: ἀναρρήξας τὸ κράτος τῶν κύκλων, "burst through the strength of the spheres."

The Entirety. Even though 'universe' is implied, I have refrained from using that English word given its modern astronomical and cosmological connotations, and have instead opted for a literal translation of ὅλος.

ordered system. κόσμος here as 'the ordered system' just described: the land, oceon, Sun, the heavens, the bodies of the stars.

20.

purposes. νοήματα.

21.

enclose your psyche in your body. cf. section I of tractate VII where enclosing the psyche in the body is also mentioned.

indulging the body and rotten. φιλοσώματος here implies 'indulging the body' rather than 'loving the body' just as κακός implies 'rotten', 'base', rather than some abstract, disputable 'evil' or (vide Nock) "le vice suprême."

the numinous. τὸ θεῖον. In other words, 'the divine'.

its own (way). Following the MSS which have ἰδία, omitted by Nock.

eikon. Tentatively reading οὐδὲν γάρ ἐστιν ὃ οὐκ εἰκὼν θείου, which is not altogether satisfactory. The MSS have εἰκόνι. Nock emends to οὐδὲν γάρ ἐστιν ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν (there is nothing that it is not) which seems somewhat at odds with the preceding "to be completely rotten is..." and with theos/the numinous being evident, presenced, in τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ καλόν, ἡ εὐδαιμονία.

Regarding eikon, qv. the note in the commentary on section 15.

22.

speak softy. εὐφήμησον is a formulaic phrase (cf. Tractate XIII:8, ὦ τέκνον, καὶ εὐφήμησον καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐ καταπαύσει τὸ ἔλεος εἰς ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) suggesting "speak softly" and with reverence.

Περὶ νοῦ κοινοῦ πρὸς Τάτ

To Thoth, Concerning Mutual Perceiveration

Tractate XII

°°°

Introduction

While the first few sentences of the twelfth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum have some similarity to what Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, wrote in a polemic a century or two later [1], the rest of the twelfth tractate - with its mention of the Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων (the Noble Daimon), with its echo of Heraclitus, with its mention that "some mortals are deities with their mortal nature close to divinity," and with its themes of ψυχή (psyche) and ἀνάγκη (wyrd, 'necessity', 'fate') - is ineluctably part of Greco-Roman paganism, where by the term paganism I personally - following Cicero [3] - mean "an apprehension of the complete unity (a cosmic order, κόσμος, mundus) beyond the apparent parts of that unity, together with the perceiveration that we mortals – albeit a mere and fallible part of the unity – have been gifted with our existence so that we may perceive and understand this unity, and, having so perceived, may ourselves seek to be whole, and thus become as balanced (perfectus), as harmonious, as the unity itself." [3] Furthermore, this unity derives from 'the theos', the primary divinity, who gifted we mortals with life, and is manifest in - presenced by - other divinities, by daimons [4], and by what we have come to describe as Nature, that is, as the natural world existing on Earth with its diversity of living beings.

Furthermore, although, as with several other tractates, the name of Τάτ (Thoth) appears in the title, there is nothing in the text, or in the other texts of the Corpus, which points to native Egyptian influence; a lack of influence supported

by the recent scholarly edition of the ancient *Book of Thoth* edited by Jasnow and Zauzich [5], and by the earlier work of A-J. Festugiere [6].

°°°

[1] *Epistula de Decretis Nycaenae Synodi*, II, 3f, and IV, 22ff.

[2] "Neque enim est quicquam aliud praeter mundum quoi nihil absit quodque undique aptum atque perfectum expletumque sit omnibus suis numeris et partibus […] ipse autem homo ortus est ad mundum contemplandum et imitandum – nullo modo perfectus, sed est quaedam particula perfecti." M. Tullius Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, Liber Secundus, xiii, xiv, 37

[3] The quotation is from my 2014 essay *Education And the Culture of Pathei-Mathos*, and paraphrases what Cicero wrote in Book II (xiii and xiv) of his *De Natura Deorum*.

As I noted in the aforementioned essay,

> "it is my considered opinion that the English term 'balanced' (a natural completeness, a natural equilibrium) is often a better translation of the classical Latin *perfectus* than the commonly accepted translation of 'perfect', given what the English word 'perfect' now imputes (as in, for example, 'cannot be improved upon'), and given the association of the word 'perfect' with Christian theology and exegesis (as, for example, in suggesting a moral perfection)."

[4] A δαίμων was considered to be a divinity who undertook to protect places 'sacred to the gods' or who - following the deliberations of a particular deity or of various deities - undertook to intercede in the lives of mortals by, for example, bringing them good fortune or misfortune. It was thus a tradition in ancient Greece and Rome to, at a meal, toast with wine the Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων in the hope that he would bring them good fortune. Similarly, the Romans especially would offer a toast to the Ἄγνωστος Θεός (the Unknown Theos) and/or to the Ἄγνωστος Δαίμων (the Unknown Daemon) in the hope of not offending a deity or daimon whose name they did not know.

To translate δαίμων as 'demon' - as some do - is misleading, and can lead to a retrospective reinterpretation of the text given what the English term 'demon' now imputes as a result of over a thousand years of Christianity.

[5] Richard Jasnow & Karl-Theodore Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth: A Demotic Discourse on Knowledge and Pendant to the Classical Hermetica*. Volume 1: Text. Harrassowitz, 2005.

[6] A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 4 volumes. J. Gabalda, 1944-1954

Translation

[1] Perceiveration, Thoth, is of the quidditas of theos, if there is a quidditas of theos, and if so then only theos completely understands what that quidditas is. Perceiveration is thus not separated from the quiddity of theos but rather expands forth, as does the light of the Sun, with this perceiveration, in mortals, theos so that some mortals are deities with their mortal nature close to divinity.

For the noble daimon spoke of deities as deathless mortals and of mortals as deathful deities, while in living beings deprived of logos perceiverance is their physis.

[2] Where psyche is, there also is perceiveration just as where Life is there also is psyche. But in living beings deprived of logos, psyche is Life empty of perceiverance while perceiveration is the patron of the psyche of mortals labouring for their nobility. For those deprived of logos it co-operates with the physis of each, while for mortals it works against that.

Every psyche presenced in a body is naturally rotted by pleasure and pain for in that mixtion of a body the pleasure and the pain boil as profluvia into which the psyche is immersed.

[3] Whatever psyches perceiveration governs it manifests its own resplendence, working as it does against their predispositions. Just as an honourable physician painfully uses cautery or a knife on a body seized by sickness so does perceiveration distress psyche, extracting from it that pleasure which is the genesis of all psyche's sickness.

A serious sickness of psyche is neglect of the divine from whence prognostications and thence all rottenness and nothing noble. Yet perceiveration can work against this to secure nobility for psyche as the physician does for soundness of body.

[4] But the psyche of mortals who do not have perceiveration as their guide suffer the same as living beings deprived of logos, for when there is co-operation with them and a letting-loose of yearnings they are dragged along

by their cravings to be voided of logos, and - akin to living beings deprived of logos - they cannot stop their anger nor their emotive yearnings nor become disgusted by rottenness.

For such yearnings and anger are overwhelmingly bad. And on those ones, the theos - avenger, confutant - will impose what custom demands.

[5] Father, if that is so, then your previous discourse regarding Meiros seems at risk of being altered. For if it is indeed Meiros-decreed for someone to be unfaithful or desecrate what is sacred or be otherwise bad, then why is that person punished when they have been constrained by Meiros to do the deed?

My son, all that is done is Meiros-decreed with nothing corporeal independent of that. For neither nobility nor rottenness are produced by accident. It is Meiros-decreed that they having done what is bad are afflicted which is why it was done: to be afflicted by what afflicts them.

[6] But for now let the discourse not be about badness or Meiros; they are spoken about elsewhere. Instead, let us discourse about perceiveration; what it is able to do and how it varies. For mortals, it is a particular thing while for living beings deprived of logos it is something else. Also, in those other living beings it does not produce benefits. But because it can control the irritable, the covetous, it is not the same for everyone with it being appreciated that some of those persons are reasonable while others are unreasonable.

All mortals are subjected to Meiros as well as to geniture and changement, which are the origin and the consummation of Meiros,

[7] with all mortals afflicted by what is Meiros-decreed, although those gifted with sentience who - as mentioned - are governed by perceiveration are not afflicted in the same way as others. Because they are distanced from rottenness, they are not afflicted by the rotten.

What, father, are you then saying? That the unfaithful one, that the killer, and all other such ones, are not bad?

My son, the one gifted with sentience will, though not unfaithful, be afflicted as if they had been unfaithful just as, though not a killer, they will as if they had killed. It is not possible to avoid geniture nor the disposition of changement although the one of perceiveration can avoid rottenness.

[8] I heard that from of old the noble daimon spoke of - and would that he had written it for that would have greatly benefited the race of mortals since he alone, my son, as first-born divinity beholding everything, certainly gave voice to divine logoi - but, whatever, I heard him to say that all that exists is one, particularly conceptible things.

We have our being in potentiality, in activity, in Aion, whose perceiveration is noble as is his psyche, and with this as it is, there is nothing separable among what is conceptible. Thus perceiveration, Archon of everything and also the psyche of theos, can do whatever it desires.

[9] Therefore you should understand, relating these words to your previous question when you asked about Meiros. For if, my son, you diligently eliminate disputatious argument you will discover that perceiveration - psyche of theos - does in truth rule over Meiros and Custom and everything else. There is nothing he is unable to do: not placing a mortal psyche over Meiros, nor, if negligent of what comes to pass, placing it under Meiros. And of what the noble daimon said, these were the most excellent about all this.

How numinous, father; and how true, how beneficial.

[10] And now, can you explain this to me. You said that perceiverance in living beings deprived of logos is in accordance with their physis and in consort with their cravings. Yet the cravings of living beings deprived of logos are, I assume, somatic, and if perceiveration co-operates with the cravings and if the cravings of those deprived of logos are somatic then is not perceiveration also somatic, in alliance with the somatic?

Excellent, my son. A good question which I have to answer.

[11] Everything incorporeal when corporified is somatical, although it is properly of the somatic. For all that changes is incorporeal with all that is changed corporeal. The incorporeal is changed by perceiverance, with changeability somatic. Both the changing and the changed are affected, with one leading, the other following. If released from the corporeal, there is release from the somatic. In particular, my son, there is nothing that is asomatic with everything somatic with the somatic being different from the somatical. For one is vigorous, the other non-active. The corporeal, in itself, is vigorous, either when changed or when not changing, and whichever it is, it is somatic, However, the incorporeal is always acted upon which is why it is somatical.

But do not allow such denotata to vex you, for vigour and the somatic are the same, although there is nothing wrong in using the better-sounding denotatum.

[12] Father, that was a clear answer that you gave.

Take note, my son, of the two things that theos has favoured mortals with, over and above all other deathful living beings: perceiveration and logos, equal in value to deathlessness, and if they use those as required then there is no difference between them and the deathless. And when they depart from the corporeal they will be escorted by both to the assembly of the gods and the fortunate ones.

[13] And yet, father, do other living beings not have language?

No, my son, they have sounds, and language is quite different from sounds. Language is shared among all mortals while each kind of living being has its own sounds.

And also, father, among mortals for each folk have a different language.

Yes, my son, different but since mortal nature is One then language is also One, for when interpreted they are found to be the same whether in Egypt or in Persia or in Hellas. Thus it seems, my child, that you are unaware of the significance and the merit of language.

That hallowed divinity, the noble daimon, spoke of psyche in corporeality, of perceiveration in psyche, of logos in perceiveration, of perceiveration in the theos, and of the theos as the father of those.

[14] For logos is eikon of perceiveration, perceiveration that of theos, with corporeality that of outward form, and outward form that of psyche. The finest part of Substance is Air. Of Air, psyche. Of psyche, perceiveration. Of perceiveration, theos, with theos encompassing all things and within all things; with perceiveration encompassing psyche, psyche encompassing Air, and Air encompassing Substance.

Necessitas, forseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos, and of the arrangement of Substance, and whatever is apprehended is essence with that essence of each their ipseity. Of the corpora that exist, each is a multiplicity, and since the ipseity of combined corpora is the changement of one corpus to another they always retain the imputrescence of ipseity.

[15] Yet in other combined corpora there is for each of them an arithmos, for without arithmos it is not possible for such a bringing together, such a melding, such a dissolution, to come-into-being. Henads beget and grow arithmos and, on its dissolution, receive it into themselves.

Substance is One, and the complete cosmic order - a mighty theos and eikon of and in unison with a mightier one - is, in maintaining the arrangements and the purpose of the father, replete with Life. And through the paternally given cyclic return of Aion there is nothing within it - in whole or in part - which is not alive.

For nothing of the cosmic order that has come-into-being is - or is now or will be - necrotic since the father has determined that Life shall be there while it exists. And thus, because of Necessitas, it is divine.

[16] Thus, how - my son - in that eikon of all things with its repletion of Life can there be necrosis? For necrosis is putritude and putritude is perishment. How then is it possible for any portion of what is not putrid be be putrid or for

anything of theos to perish?

Therefore, father, do not the living beings - who have their being there - not perish?

Speak wisely, my son, and do not be led away by the denotata of being-becoming. For, my son, they do not perish but as combined corpora are dissolved with such a dissolving not death but the dissolution of the melding, and dissolved not so as to perish but for a new coming-into-being. For what is the vigour of Life if not change?

What then, of Kosmos, does not change? Nothing, my child.

[17] Does the Earth seem to you, father, to not change?

No, my son. But she is alone in that there are many changes but also stasis. For would it not be illogical if the nourisher - she who brings-forth everything - never changed? It is not possible for she, the bringer-forth, to bring-forth without being changed. It is illogical for you to enquire if the fourth parsement is inactive, since an unchanging corpus is indicative of inactivity.

[18] You should therefore understand that what exists of Kosmos is everywhere changing, either growing or declining, and that what is changing is living with all that lives not, because of Necessitas, the same. For Kosmos, in the entirety of its being, is not changeable even though its parts can be changeable, with nothing putrefiable or perishable, although such denotata can confuse we mortals. For geniture is not Life but rather alertness, nor is changement death but rather a forgetting.

Since this is so, Substance, Life, Pneuma, Psyche, Perceiveration, are all deathless, with every living being some combination of them.

[19] Because of perceiveration all living beings are deathless, and most certain of all is that mortals are, for they - receptive to theos - can interact with theos. For only with this living being does theos commune in nightful dreams and daylight auguration, forewarning what is possible through birds, through entrails, through the movements of air, and through trees of Oak. And thus do mortals profess to know what was past, what is now, what will be.

[20] Observe, my son, that every other living being inhabits a certain part of the world; in water for those of the water, on dry land for those on land, and above the ground for those of the air. But mortals employ them all; land, water, air, fire. They observe the heavens, and touch it through their senses, and theos encompasses and is within all such things, for he is Change and Capability.

Thus, my son, it is not difficult to apprehend theos.

[21] If you are disposed to consider him, then perceive the arrangement of Kosmos and how that arrangement is well-ordered. Perceive Necessitas in what is apparent and the foreseeing in what has come-into-being and what is coming-into-being. Perceive Substance replete with Life, and the great, the influencive, theos together with all the noble and the beautiful divinities, daimons, and mortals.

But those, father, are actuosities.

Yet, my son, if they are only actuosities then by whom - other than theos - are they actuose? Or do you not know that just as aspects of the world are the heavens, the land, the Water, and the Air, then in the same way his aspects are deathlessness, blood, Necessitas, Foreseeing, Physis, Psyche, Perceiveration, and that the continuance of all these is what is called nobility? And that there is not anything that has come-into-being or which is coming-into-being that is or will be without theos?

[22] He is within Substance, then, father?

If, my son, Substance was separate from theos then where, to what place, would you assign it? To some heap that is not actuose? But if it is actuose, then by whom is it actuose? And we spoke of actuosities as aspects of theos.

So who then brings life to living beings? Who deathlessness to the deathless? Who change to those changed? And if you say Substance or corpus or essence, then understand that they also are actuosities of theos, so that the substantiality is the actuosity of Substance, corporeality the actuosity of corpora, and essentiality the actuosity of essence. And this is theos, All That Exists.

[23] For in all that exists there is no-thing that he is not. Therefore, neither size, nor location nor disposition, nor appearance, nor age, are about theos. For he is all that exists; encompassing everything and within everything.

This, my son, is the Logos, to be respected and followed. And if there is one way to follow theos, it is not to be bad.

°°°

Commentary

Title.

Περὶ νοῦ κοινοῦ πρὸς Τάτ. To Thoth, Concerning Mutual Perceiveration.

1.

perceiveration. As with my other translations of Corpus Hermeticum texts I translate νοῦς not as 'mind' but as perceiveration/perceiverance, qv. my commentary on Poemandres, 2.

quidditas. οὐσία. Here, as with tractates VI and XI, 'essence' in respect of theos is not an entirely satisfactory translation given what the English term essence often now imputes. Quidditas is post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity, and requires contextual interpretation. As in tractate VI, one interpretation of quidditas is ontological, as 'the being of that being/entity', with such quidditas often presenced in - and perceived by we mortals via or as - φύσις (physis). Which interpretation has the virtue of avoiding assumptions as to whether the author is here presenting something similar to the Stoic weltanschauung or to other ancient weltanschauungen.

understands. In respect of οἶδεν as 'understand' rather than 'know' qv. 1 Corinthians 14:16, ἐπειδὴ τί λέγεις οὐκ οἶδεν: "since he does not understand what you say." Furthermore, in Plato, Meno, 80e 'understanding' and 'understand' make more sense than the conventional 'knowing' and 'know':

> ὁρᾷς τοῦτον ὡς ἐριστικὸν λόγον κατάγεις ὡς οὐκ ἄρα ἔστιν ζητεῖν ἀνθρώπῳ οὔτε ὃ οἶδε οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδε; οὔτε γὰρ ἂν ὅ γε οἶδεν ζητοῖ οἶδεν γάρ καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖ τῷ γε τοιούτῳ ζητήσεως οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδεν οὐδὲ γὰρ οἶδεν ὅτι ζητήσει.
>
> Do you realize what a contestable argument you introduce? That a mortal cannot inquire either about what he understands or about what he does not understand? That he cannot inquire about what he understands because he understands it with an inquiry thus not necessary; and that he cannot inquire about what he does not understand because he does not understand what he should inquire about.

quiddity of theos. οὐσιότητος τοῦ θεοῦ. Using the word quiddity here not as a

synonym of quidditas but as a synonym of 'quiddítativeness', where quiddítative is "of or relating to the essential quidditas of some-thing", in this case theos.

mortal nature. ἀνθρωπότης. I incline toward the view that the neutral term 'mortal nature' is appropriate here, given what the English word 'humanity' now so often implies; a neutral term suggested not only by the scholia to the first verses of Orestes by Euripides:

> κατασκευὴν ποιούμενος ὁ ποιητὴς τῆς ἰδίας προτάσεως τῆς ὅτι πάντα φέρει τὰ δεινὰ ἡ ἀνθρωπότης, ἐπιφέρει ὅτι καὶ αὐτοὶ οἱ μακάριοι καὶ ὄλβιοι δόξαντες ἄνθρωποι οὐκ ἄμοιροι συμφορῶν καὶ παθῶν γεγόνασιν· ἐξ ἑνὸς δὲ τοῦ Ταντάλου καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους παραδηλοῖ. τὸν Τάνταλον δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἄλλον τῇ ὑποθέσει προσείληφε διὰ τὸ ἐξ ἐκείνου τοῦ γένους καὶ τὸν Ὀρέστην κατάγεσθαι

but also by *De Sancta Trinitate Dialogus* of Athanasius (Migne, *Patrologiæ Græcæ*, 28, 1115), with the first verse of the Orestes expressing what is meant and implied:

> Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν δεινὸν ὧδ᾽ εἰπεῖν ἔπος οὐδὲ πάθος οὐδὲ ξυμφορὰ θεήλατος, ἧς οὐκ ἂν ἄραιτ᾽ ἄχθος ἀνθρώπου φύσις.
>
> There is nothing that can be described, no suffering, and nothing sent by the gods, which is so terrifyingly strange that mortal nature cannot endure it.

the noble daimon. Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων. The daimon who can bring good fortune (health, wealth, happiness, honour) and other benefits to mortals and who thus is considered to be noble. As mentioned in the Introduction, a daimon is not a 'demon'.

deathless...deathful. For these in respect of ἀθάνατος and θνητὸς qv. my commentary on Poemandres 14, tractate VIII:1, and tractate XI:7ff.

The phrase spoken by the Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων is similar to one attributed to Heraclitus:

> ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες. (Fragment 62, Diels-Krantz)
>
> The deathless are deathful, the deathful deathless, with one living the other's dying with the other dying in that other's life.

deprived of logos. ἄλογος. As at Poemandres 10 and tractate XI:10, a literal translation suggested by the context which thus avoids rather awkward expressions such as "animals without reason" and "irrational animals", and

which might also suggest not only various other meanings of logos such as "lacking (the faculty of) speech, lacking in sentience," but also that such living beings have not been gifted by theos with logos:

> τὸ ἐν σοὶ βλέπον καὶ ἀκοῦον, λόγος κυρίου, ὁ δὲ νοῦς πατὴρ θεός. οὐ γὰρ διίστανται ἀπ' ἀλλήλων· ἕνωσις γὰρ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ ζωή
>
> Then know that within you - who hears and sees - is logos kyrios, although perceiveration is theos the father. They are not separated, one from the other, because their union is Life. (Poemandres 6)

perceiverance is their physis. Reading ὁ νοῦς ἡ φύσις. Here φύσις implies their being - the type of being (the 'character') they have, and are - and thus means their quidditas, which quidditas is in contrast to that of theos, deities, and mortals.

2.

psyche. A transliteration, as in my translations of other tractates. It is possible to read the line as referring to personifications: "Where Psyche is, there also is Perceiveration just as where Life is there also is Psyche." Classically understood, psyche is the anima mundi, the power that animates - gives life to and which orders - the world.

in living beings deprived of logos, psyche is Life. On first reading there seems to be a contradiction between what follows - ἡ ψυχὴ ζωή ἐστι κενὴ τοῦ νοῦ, [in living beings deprived of logos] psyche is Life empty of perceiverance - and the preceding ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀλόγοις ζώιοιςὁ νοῦς ἡ φύσις ἐστίν, which states that "in living beings deprived of logos perceiverance is their physis." The sense of the Greek therefore seems to suggest that the perceiverance of living beings deprived of logos is a vacuous, empty, one: they perceive but it does not benefit them in the same manner as perceiverance benefits mortals because there is no understanding of, no rational apprehension of, what is perceived.

mixtion. σύνθετος. Mixtion is more appropriate here in such a metaphysical text than either 'composite' or 'compound', meaning as mixtion does compounded, combined; the condition or state of being mixed, melded, or composed of various parts.

profluvia. χυμός. That is, the bodily 'humours', anciently named as blood, phlegm, choler (χολέρα), and bile. Since the English word 'humour' now often suggests an entirely different meaning, I have chosen profluvia - from the Latin profluvium - in order to try and convey something of the meaning of the Greek, qv. Coleridge: "The same deadly sweats - the same frightful Profluvium of burning Dregs, like melted Lead - with quantities of bloody mucus from the Coats of the Intestines." *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1956. Volume II, 911: Letter dated 8th Jan.

immersed. βαπτίζω. Cf. tractate IV:3: καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, "and were immersive with perceiveration."

3.

cautery or a knife. καίων ἢ τέμνων. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 848-850,

> ὅτῳ δὲ καὶ δεῖ φαρμάκων παιωνίων,
> ἤτοι κέαντες ἢ τεμόντες εὐφρόνως
> πειρασόμεσθα πῆμ᾽ ἀποστρέψαι νόσου
>
> Whomsoever needs a healing potion
> By a burning-out or a well-judged cutting-away
> I shall seek to defeat the sickness of that injury.

neglect of the divine. ἀθεότης. The usual translation, atheism, seems to me to impose a particular and rigid meaning on the text given the association the word atheism now has with Christianity and in modern philosophy. The phrase 'neglect of the divine' expresses a more Hellenistic view, qv. the term ἀθεράπευτος and also Plutarch, who wrote:

> Οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος, ἡ μὲν ἀθεότης κρίσις οὖσα φαύλη τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον εἰς ἀπάθειάν τινα δοκεῖ τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ τοῦ θείου περιφέρειν, καὶ τέλος ἐστὶν αὐτῇ τοῦ μὴ νομίζειν θεοὺς τὸ μὴ φοβεῖσθαι, *De Superstitione*, 165b
>
> Thus we return to our topic, neglect of the divine, which is the bad decision that nothing is hallowed or everlasting, which with its disbelief in the divine seems to lead to a type of apathy with the result that there is no fear of divinity since it does not exist.

4.

for when there is co-operation with them…voided of logos. The Greek here is somewhat obscure, although the meaning seems to be along the following lines: when perceiveration co-operates with a serious sickness such as neglect of the divine then yearnings, desires, are given free reign so that those mortals, haplessly carried away by their cravings, become just like animals, voided of what makes them human.

what custom demands. In respect of νομός the term 'law' - with all its modern and Old Testament associations (as in 'the law of God') - is inappropriate since the Greek term implies what it is the customary thing to do. Hence, "what custom demands."

5.

Meiros. While μείρομαι here is conventionally understood as referring to 'fate', given the variety of meanings attributed to that term - a useful summary of classical usage is given in Book I, chapter XXVII of *Placita Philosophorum* attributed to the Pseudo-Plutarch - it seems apposite to suggest an alternative, especially as the text apparently does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question which Thoth goes on to ask: if 'fate' does compel someone to do something bad then why are they punished?

The mention of ἀνάγκης - 'Necessity', Ananke - in what follows (section 14: ἀνάγκη δὲ καὶ ἡ πρόνοια καὶ ἡ φύσις ὄργανά ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῆς τάξεως τῆς ὕλης) might indicate the Heraclitean sense of μείρομαι, as summarized by the Pseudo-Plutarch,

> Ἡράκλειτος πάντα καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην, τὴν δ᾽ αὐτὴν ὑπάρχειν καὶ ἀνάγκην.

Yet the immediate context - ἔλεγχον ὁ θεὸς ἐπέστησε τὸν νόμον - might seem to suggest θέσφατον (divine decree), as for example in Sophocles:

> "εἴ τι θέσφατον πατρὶ χρησμοῖσιν ἱκνεῖθ᾽ ὥστε πρὸς παίδων θανεῖν."
> *Oedipus at Colonus*, 969-970

However, given that what follows - Εἱμαρμένης γὰρ πάντα τὰ ἔργα [...] καὶ χωρὶς ἐκείνης οὐδέν ἐστι τῶν σωματικῶν - I have chosen to use a transliteration, Meiros, based on the personification Moros in Hesiod's Theogony:

> νὺξ δ᾽ ἔτεκεν στυγερόν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαιναν καὶ Θάνατον,
> τέκε δ᾽ Ὕπνον, ἔτικτε δὲ φῦλον Ὀνείρων (211-212)
>
> And Night gave birth to odious Moros, to darksome Kir and to Death,
> and also brought-into-being Hypnos and the folk of Dreams.

While the transliteration Meiros has the undoubted advantage - as with logos, theos, physis, και τα λοιπά - of requiring contextual interpretation and thus avoiding whatever presumptions the reader might have in respect of the meaning of the English term 'fate', it has the disadvantage of not having, in English, an appropriate suffix such as, in respect of fate, -ed allowing as that does εἱμαρτός to be translated by 'fated'. The only solution - somewhat awkward as it is - is to translate such a word by a term such as 'Meiros-decreed' (or Meiros-appointed) so that the phrase εἰ δ᾽ ἄρα τις οὗτος εἱμαρτὸς ἥκει χρόνος (Plutarch, Alexander, 30.6) would approximate to "if indeed a Meiros appointed moment has now arrived."

unfaithful. The sense of μοιχεύω is not stridently moralistic, as the English term adultery - with all its Old Testament associations - now often still denotes and

has for centuries denoted with its implication of 'sin'. Rather, the sense is more anciently pagan: of marital unfaithfulness, of a personal (and thus dishonourable) betrayal, as in Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1374a, συγγενέσθαι ἀλλ᾽ οὐ μοιχεῦσαι (not unfaithful in the matter of [sexual] intercourse). Similarly in Aristophanes:

> ὁ δ᾽ ἁλούς γε μοιχὸς διὰ σέ που παρατίλλεται. (Plutus, 170)
>
> it will be because of you if the unfaithful one is caught, and their head shaved.

In addition, in origin the Anglo-Norman word adulterie - derived as it was from the Latin adulterium (adulteration, contaminating or debasing something) - simply meant marital unfaithfulness without the later religious associations such as voiced by Thomas More in his 1532 work The Confutacyon of Tyndales Answere: "wedlokke [...] whyche god hym selfe bothe blessed and commaunded in paradyse and whyche holy scrypture commendeth where it sayth that wedlokke is honorable where the bedde is vndefyled wyth auowtry." (ccliii)

what is bad. Reading τὸ κακὸν and not τὸ καλὸν.

6.

geniture and changement. γενέσει καὶ μεταβολῆι. In respect of geniture, qv. my commentary on tractate XI:2, that "the unusual English word geniture expresses the meaning of γένεσις here: that which or those whom have their genesis (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else."

In respect of changement, as I noted in a comment on tractate XI:4, "I have here chosen 'changement' in preference to 'change' since changement (coming into English use around 1584) is more specific than 'change', suggesting variation, alteration, development, unfolding, transmutation."

7.

gifted with sentience. ἔλλογος. The Greek term occurs in the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle where he discusses the views of Eudoxus:

> εὔδοξος μὲν οὖν τὴν ἡδονὴν τἀγαθὸν ὤετ᾽ εἶναι διὰ τὸ πάνθ᾽ ὁρᾶν ἐφιέμενα αὐτῆς καὶ ἔλλογα καὶ ἄλογα (1172b.10)
>
> Eudoxus considered that delight was the beneficent since his perception was that all, sentient or not sentient, saught it.

In a comment on this passage from Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas wrote:

> quod Eudoxus existimabat delectationem esse de genere bonorum,

> quia videbat quod omnia desiderant ipsam, tam rationalia scilicet homines, quam irrationalia, scilicet bruta animalia. (*Sententia libri Ethicorum*, Book X, l. 2 n. 2)

where the contrast, as in Aristotle, is between those gifted with sentience and those lacking sentience, but with Aquinas adding that the latter are 'dumb' animals (brutis animalibus), a difference between humans and animals that he considers in detail in his Summa Theologiae (Prima Secundae, Quaestiones 6-17).

killer. φονεὺς. To use the English word 'murderer' as a translation of the Greek carries with it relatively modern connotations that in my opinion are inappropriate, given that the word 'murder' can impute the sense of "the deliberate and unlawful killing of a human being" and "the action of killing or causing destruction of life, regarded as wicked and morally reprehensible irrespective of its legality."

The classical sense is evident, for example, in Sophocles:

> φονέα σε φημὶ τἀνδρὸς οὗ ζητεῖς κυρεῖν (Oedipus Tyrannus, 362)
>
> I said you are the killer and thus the man you seek
>
> κἀνταῦθ᾽ Ἀπόλλων οὔτ᾽ ἐκεῖνον ἤνυσεν
> φονέα γενέσθαι πατρὸς οὔτε Λάϊον
> τὸ δεινὸν οὐφοβεῖτο πρὸς παιδὸς θανεῖν (Oedipus Tyrannus, 720-702)
>
> So, in those days, Apollo did not bring about, for him,
> That he slay the father who begot him - nor, for Laius,
> That horror which he feared - being killed by his son.

Thus the choice is between two relatively neutral terms: killer, and slayer. Neither of which imputes the moralistic or legal sense of "unlawful killing" or of the act being "wicked and morally reprehensible." Instead, it is a statement of fact.

the one gifted with sentience will, though not unfaithful, be afflicted... just as, though not a killer, they will as if they had killed. An interesting passage which might be taken to mean that those gifted with sentience - who presumably are also, as the tractate states, "governed/guided by their perceiveration" - have the ability because of such things to know, understand, to intuit, what killing and unfaithfulness mean and imply (especially in terms of affliction) as if they themselves had done such things. That is, they have empathy, and thus can avoid doing what is bad.

disposition. See the note regarding ποιότης in section 23 below.

8.

the noble daimon spoke of...would that he had written it. This seems to allude to an aural tradition, perhaps (qv. my introduction to tractate III) an Ιερός Λόγος, which was never written down, with the suggestion that what is being recounted in this tractate is such a tradition.

first-born divinity. πρωτόγονος θεός. While some assume that this refers to something Egyptian - for example, to the deity Khnum - I incline toward the view that it may be (i) a reference to an Orphic tradition, given that there is an Orphic poem which beings Πρωτόγονον καλέω διφυῆ μέγαν αἰθερόπλαγκτον, or (ii) more probably a term still in general use in Hellenic culture given it that was, for example, an epithet of the goddess Persephone, and given that it occurs in the commentary on Plato's Timaeus by Proclus.

divine logoi. θείους λόγους. Cf. τοὺς λόγους διδάσκων and σοφίας λόγους in Poemandres 29. There, the logoi are the various forms (or emanations) of the logos, and include the pneumal logos, the phaomal logos, and the logos kyrios.

> I [...] thus became a guide to those of my kind, informing them of the logoi - of the way and the means of rescue - and engendered in them the logoi of sapientia, with the celestial elixir to nurture them. (Poemandres 29)

conceptible things. νοητὰ σώματα. That is, objects - things, materia, 'bodies' - which can be conceived of, which are conceptible, rather than having been physically seen, qv. the 'atoms' of Democritus: ἐτεῇι δὲ ἄτομα καὶ κενόν. See also Sextus Empiricus: οἱ γὰρ ἀτόμους εἰπόντες ἢ ὁμοιομερείας ἢ ὄγκους ἢ κοινῶς νοητὰ σώματα πάντων τῶν ὄντων κατώρθωσαν πῇ δὲ διέπεσον (Adversus Mathematicos, X, 252).

We have our being in potentiality, in activity, in Aion. ζῶμεν δὲ δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείαι καὶ Αἰῶνι. In respect of Aion, qv. tractate XI:3,

> πηγὴ μὲν οὖν πάντων ὁ θεός, οὐσία δὲ ὁ αἰών, ὕλη δὲ ὁ κόσμος, δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών, ἔργον δὲ τοῦ αἰῶνος ὁ κόσμος, γενόμενος οὔποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος·
>
> The foundation of all being is theos; of their quidditas, Aion; of their substance, Kosmos. The craft of theos: Aion; the work of Aion: Kosmos, which is not just a coming-into-being but always is, from Aion.

nothing separable. οὐδὲν διαστατὸν. As noted in respect of διαστατός in the commentary on tractate IV:1, "what is not meant is 'dimension', given what the term 'dimension' now imputes scientifically and otherwise."

Archon. Cf. the MS reading ἄρχων καὶ ἡγέμων (archon and hegemon) in tractate XI:7. Since ἄρχων has been assimilated into the English language and

retained (c. 1755) its original meaning (ruler, governer, regent) it seems unnecessary to translate the term.

perceiveration...whatever it desires. Cf Poemandres 12: ὁ δὲ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ Νοῦς ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς... Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all...

9.

Numinous. θεῖος. As at tractate IV:6 I have opted for the English word numinous - which dates from 1647, derived from the classical Latin *numen* - to express the meaning of θεῖος here.

10.

somatic. πάθος. The English word somatic - from the Greek σῶμα - means "of or relating to the body; physical, corporeal". As in tractate VI:2 the sense of πάθος here is one of physicality, as in being physically afflicted or affected such that a 'living being deprived of logos' cannot control or affect the affliction, in this instance their cravings. As such, the English word 'passion' is inappropriate here as a translation of πάθος because it implies strong or deep feelings or emotions generally in human beings and thus is somewhat anthropomorphic, especially as a distinction is being made, as in sections 2 and 5, between mortals and those living beings, such as animals, who lack logos, which logos together with perceiveration, are - as mentioned in section 12 - the two most precious gifts theos has given to mortals: ὅτι δύο ταῦτα τῶι ἀνθρώπωι ὁ θεὸς παρὰ πάντα τὰ θνητὰ ζῶια ἐχαρίσατο τόν τε νοῦν καὶ τὸν λόγον, σότιμα τῆι ἀθανασίαι.

in alliance with the somatic. Reading συγχρηματίζων with the MSS and not the emendation συγχρωτίζων.

11.

corporeal, incorporeal. σῶμα, ἀσώματος. To try and express at least something of the meaning of the Greek here - which is somewhat metaphysically obscure - I have occasionally resorted to obsolete forms of those two English terms, such as 'corporified' (from corporify) implying "having a material or a bodily form".

In respect of the corporeal and the incorporeal, see tractates VIII and XI. In VIII one of the main themes is the corporeal: "It is regarding psyche and the corporeal that we now must speak..." In XI:22 it is stated that

> οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀόρατον, οὐδὲ τῶν ἀσωμάτων· νοῦς ὁρᾶται ἐν τῶι νοεῖν, ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῶι ποιεῖν
>
> nothing is unperceivable, not even the incorporeal, with perceiveration evident through apprehension, theos through creation.

somatical. παθητά. The sense is of being affected by, or subject to, what is somatic. As what follows - καὶ κυρίως αὐτά ἐστι πάθη - attempts to explain, and as is made clear later on in this section (διαφέρει δὲ πάθος παθητοῦ) somatical should not be confused with somatic.

changes, changed. Given the context, the various senses of κίνησις here are change, not motion - moving, move - in the physical sense as at tractate XI:8, πάντα δὲ πλήρη ψυχῆς καὶ πάντα κινούμενα, τὰ μὲν περὶ τὸν οὐρανόν, τὰ δὲ περὶ τὴν γῆν, all are replete with psyche, all in motion, some around the heavens with others around the Earth.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. Qv. Poemandres 14 and 15. The English terms energy and energize have too many modern, irrelevant, connotations, in respect of the science of physics and otherwise.

12.

perceiveration and logos. Omitting - with Patrizi - the following τὸν δὲ προφορικὸνλόγον ἔχει as a gloss.

deathlessness. In respect of this unusual English word, qv. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Soul's Travelling* (IX),

> "And as they touch your soul, they borrow
> Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,
> That deathly odour with which the clay
> Leaves on its deathlessness alway."

denotata, denotatum. προσηγορία here implies more than 'name'. That is, a terminology; a specialized vocabulary, in this case one related to metaphysics (qv. πλανώμενος τῆι προσηγορίαι τοῦ γινομένου in section 16). Hence the translations 'denotata' and denotatum (singular) to suggest this.

13.

And yet, do other livings not have language. τὰ γὰρ ἄλλα ζῶια λόγωι οὐ χρᾶται. While λόγος here is generally taken to mean 'speech', given what follows with its mention of animals making 'sounds' and the exposition regarding the different languages spoken by mortals, the translation 'language' is more apt, as in being able to communicate, to say something specific the meaning of which can be explained and understood by diverse others. A usage of λόγος as for example in the following exchange between Oedipus and the Chorus:

> Οἰδίπους:
>
> οἶσθ᾽ οὖν ἃ χρήζεις.

Χορός:

οἶδα.

Οἰδίπους:

φράζε δὴ τί φής.

Χορός:

τὸν ἐναγῆ φίλον μήποτ᾽ ἐν αἰτίᾳ σὺν ἀφανεῖ λόγῳ σ᾽ ἄτιμον βαλεῖν.

Oedipus:

Do you know what it is that you so desire?

Chorus:

I do know.

Oedipus:

Then explain what you believe it to be.

Chorus:

When a comrade is under oath, you should never accuse him because of unproved rumours and brand him as being without honour.

(Oedipus Tyrannus, vv. 653-657)

folk. ἔθνος. Since the English term 'nation' now implies things which the Greek word does not - such as a modern political State - it is inappropriate here. A suitable alternative to folk would be 'people'.

mortal nature, Qv. section 1.

one. εἷς. It is probable that this refers to a metaphysical concept such as described in tractate XI:11,

καὶ ὅτι μὲν ἔστι τις ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα δῆλον· ὅτι δὲ καὶ εἷς, φανερώτατον· καὶ γὰρ μία ψυχὴ καὶ μία ζωὴ καὶ μία ὕλη. τίς δὲ οὗτος; τίς δὲ ἂν ἄλλος εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός; τίνι γὰρ ἄλλωι ἂν καὶ πρέποι ζῶια ἔμψυχα ποιεῖν, εἰ μὴ μόνωι τῶι θεῶι; εἷς οὖν θεός καὶ τὸν μὲν κόσμον ὡμολόγησας ἀεὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἕνα καὶ τὴν σελήνην μίαν καὶ θειότητα μίαν, αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν θεὸν πόστον εἶναι θέλεις

It is evident someone is so creating and that he is One; for Psyche is one, Life is one, Substance is one. But who is it? Who could it be if not One, the theos? To whom if

> not to theos alone would it belong to presence life in living beings? Theos therefore is One, for having accepted the Kosmos is one, the Sun is one, the Moon is one, and divinity-presenced is one, could you maintain that theos is some other number?

psyche in corporeality. The context is indicative of σώματι here referring to corporeality in general; that is, the quality or state of being corporeal; bodily form or nature; materiality.

14.

eikon. εἰκὼν, qv. my commentary on Poemandres 21 and 31, and also see tractate VIII:2 and tractate XI:15.

outward form. ἰδέα. To translate here simply as 'form' (or idea) may give the impression that the ἰδέα of Plato may be meant with the text thus interpreted in accord with his philosophy and especially with what has been termed his 'theory of forms'. However, since the reference here is to corporeality in the context of perceiveration as εἰκὼν of theos, a more metaphysical sense is suggested. Hence, my interpretation as 'outward form', which thus leaves open the question as to whether or not there is any correlation with 'the theory of forms'.

substance. ὕλη. That is, the materia of 'things' and living beings. Qv. Poemandres 10 and tractate III:1.

Air. ἀήρ. Air as a fundamental element, hence the capitalization as with the preceding Substance.

necessitas. ἀνάγκη. In myth, Ananke was the ancient goddess of wyrd, thus having power over Meiros ('fate') and of what is considered necessary for mortals (such as death), hence the translation of 'necessity'. As mentioned in my commentary on tractate XII:5, although the Latin 'Necessitas' is a suitable alternative for the Greek, a transliteration (Ananke) is perhaps preferable although less readable.

Necessitas, forseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos. Qv. tractate XII:5 where a similar expression occurs:

> συνέχει δὲ τοῦτον ὁ αἰών, εἴτε δι' ἀνάγκην εἴτε πρόνοιαν εἴτε φύσιν καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο οἴεται ἢ οἰήσεταί τις
>
> Aion maintains this through necessitas or through foreseeing or through physis, or through whatever other assumption we assume

foreseeing. πρόνοια. Foreseeing includes such arts as prophecy.

apprehended. Cf. Poemandres 3: νοῆσαι τὴν τού των φύσιν, to apprehend the physis of beings; that is to discern, discover, their being, their relation to other beings, and to Being.

corpus, corpora. I have here used a Latin term for σῶμα (corpus, plural corpora) in order to try to give some intimation of the meaning of the text (the Greek is somewhat obscure), and to avoid using the rather prosaic terms 'body' and 'bodies', and to thus suggest technical terms which expound and befit a metaphysical weltanschauung, implying as they do here 'materia' in general; the stuff, the material, that exists in the Universe, and how such corpora including mortals relate to theos.

15.

arithmos. I have detailed the reasons for transliterating ἀριθμὸς in my commentary on tractate IV:10. In essence, the translation 'number' does not express the metaphysical meaning here, qv. Aristotle *Metaphysics*, Book XIII, 1080b.20 and 1083b.10 et seq.

In addition, Proclus (in his Στοιχείωσις θεολογική, propositions 113f) wrote of ἀριθμὸς and ἑνάδες (henads) as essential parts of a cosmogony involving the gods, with Proclus equating ἑνάδες with those gods (op.cit., propositions 114ff),

> εἰ γὰρ τῶν ἑνάδων διττὸς ὁ ἀριθμός, ὡς δέδεικται πρότερον, καὶ αἱ μὲν αὐτοτελεῖς εἰσιν αἱ δὲ ἐλλάμψεις ἀπ᾽ ἐκείνων, τῶι δὲ ἑνὶ καὶ τἀγαθῶι συγγενὴς καὶ ὁμοφυὴς ὁ θεῖος ἀριθμός, ἑνάδες εἰσὶν αὐτοτελεῖς οἱ θεοί. (114)

There is also an interesting passage in a fragment of the commentary on Aristotle by Andronicus of Rhodes where psyche is said to have been described as ἀριθμὸς:

> ἀριθμὸν γὰρ ἐκάλουν φησὶ ‘τὴν ψυχήν ὅτι μηδὲν ζῶον ἐξ ἁπλοῦ σώματος ἀλλὰ κατά τινας λόγους καὶ ἀριθμοὺς κραθέντων τῶν πρώτων στοιχείων. (Themistii in libros Aristotelis De anima paraphrasis, XXXII, 23)

Regarding ἀριθμὸς in tractate IV:10, the relevant part is:

> μονὰς οὖσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἑτέρου ἀριθμοῦ.
>
> The Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos without itself being enfolded by any, begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any.

henads. ἑνάδες. A transliteration in common use since the concept of the ἑνάς - the Unity, often equated with μονὰς - is metaphysical and has various interpretations in Plato, Iamblichus, Proclus, and others.

cosmic order. κόσμος. Cf. Poemandres 7.

a mighty theos. In respect of the term μέγας θεὸς it is interesting to note that frescoes in a Minoan settlement in Akrotiri on the island of Santorini depict η μεγάλη θεά (the mighty goddess) among women holding bunches of flowers and a woman holding a net which, given the presence of birds in the fresco, is possibly for catching birds as gifts for the goddess.

The term μέγας θεὸς also occurs in Acts 19:17 in reference to the Temple of Artemis - μεγάλης θεᾶς Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερὸν - with Artemis mentioned again in v.28, Μεγάλη ἡ Ἄρτεμις Ἐφεσίων (Powerful is Artemis of the Ephesians).

cyclic return. Qv. tractate XI:2, ἀποκατάστασις καὶ ἀνταποκατάστασις, cyclic return and renewal.

while it exists. Referring to the 'cosmic order' and thus to Kosmos, eikon of a more mighty divinity.

16.

the denotata of being-becoming. Qv. the comment in section 11 regarding denotata and denotatum.

17.

nurturer. τιθήνη. Cf. tractate XI:7, τροφὸν καὶ τιθήνην, nourisher and nurturer.

fourth parsement. τέταρτον μέρος. By a parsement - partiment, from the Latin partimentum - is meant the fundamental (the basic, elemental, primal) component or principle of 'things' as understood or as posited in Hellenic times. Here Earth is described as the fourth part, the other three being Air, Water, and Fire. Cf. Poemandres 8.

18.

alertness. αἴσθησις. Alertness as in being perceptively aware of one's surroundings. Cf. Poemandres 5.

pnuema. πνεῦμα. A transliteration for reasons explained in my commentary on the text of Poemandres 5. In sum, the usual translation of 'spirit' is too restrictive and has too many modern and Christian associations. The various senses of πνεῦμα in classical times are summarized in DeWitt Burton, *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918).

19.

Therefore all living beings [...] perceiveration. Reading διὰ τὸν νοῦν and not δι' αὐτόν.

20.

capability. δύναμις. Not 'strength' or 'power' per se, but rather having the capacity, the capability, to do - to change, to craft, to bring-into-being - anything. Cf. δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών in tractate XI: 3,

> πηγὴ μὲν οὖν πάντων ὁ θεός, οὐσία δὲ ὁ αἰών, ὕλη δὲ ὁ κόσμος, δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών, ἔργον δὲ τοῦ αἰῶνος ὁ κόσμος, γενόμενος οὔποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος· διὸ οὐδὲ φθαρήσεταί ποτε αἰὼν γὰρ ἄφθαρτος οὐδὲ ἀπολεῖταί τι τῶν ἐν τῶι κόσμωι, τοῦ κόσμου ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐμπεριεχομένου.
>
> The foundation of all being is theos; of their quidditas, Aion; of their substance, Kosmos. The craft of theos: Aion; the work of Aion: Kosmos, which is not just a coming-into-being but always is, from Aion. Thus it cannot be destroyed since Aion is not destroyable nor will Kosmos cease to be since Aion surrounds it.

21.

influencive. κινέω. That is, to affect things, to set things in motion, to cause change.

actuosities. ἐνέργειαι. The sense of the Greek here is of (often vigorous) activity or occurrences either natural or which result from the actions of divinities or daimons. To try and convey something of this, I have chosen the English term 'actuosities' rather than 'energies' which - given what the English term 'energy' now often imputes - does not in my view express the metaphysical meaning here. The English word actuosity derives from the classical Latin actuosus, with the adjective actuose occurring in a 1677 book by Theophilus Gale: " Ἐνεργεῖν, as applied to God, notes his actuose, efficacious, and predeterminate concurse in and with althings." (The Court of The Gentiles. Part III, London, 1677).

A more recent usage was by Ferrarin in chapter 8 - Aristotle's De anima and Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit - of his book *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) where he wrote: "Hegel appropriates and transforms the meaning of *energeia* to define spirit. Spirit is actuosity..."

aspects. Reading μέρη ἐστὶ not μέλη ἐστὶ.

blood. Reading καὶ αἷμα with the MSS. In the metaphysical context of the tractate, blood as an 'aspect of theos' makes sense.

22.

All That Exists. τὸ πᾶν. Literally, 'the all', but metaphysically implying 'all that exists', that is, the Universe.

23.

disposition. ποιότης. As in section 7, not signifying here 'quality' but rather 'disposition,' qv. ποιός, what kind, nature, type, character.

What is being enumerated - οὔτε μέγεθος οὔτε τόπος οὔτε ποιότης οὔτε σχῆμα οὔτε χρόνος - are not abstractions (such as 'time') but rather mortal-type attributes and appellations that are irrelevant in respect of theos.

respected and followed. Given the metaphysical - not religious - tone and content of the tractate, I incline toward the view that προσκύνει καὶ θρήσκευε here does not imply a Christian-type reverence or worship or even being religious, but rather respect and following, as various Hellenic weltanschauungen or philosophies were respected and followed.

Ερμού του τρισμεγίστου προς τον υιόν Τάτ
εν όρει λόγος απόκρυφος περί παλιγγενεσίας και σιγής επαγγελίας

On A Mountain:
Hermes Trismegistus To His Son Thoth,
An Esoteric Discourse Concerning Palingenesis
And The Requirement of Silence

Tractate XIII

°°°

Translation

[1] When, father, you in the Exoterica conversed about divinity your language was enigmatic and obscure. There was, from you, no disclosure; instead, you said no one can be rescued before the Palingenesis. Now, following our discussion as we were passing over the mountain I became your supplicant, inquiring into learning the discourse on Palingenesis since that, out of all of them, is the only one unknown to me, with you saying it would be imparted to me when I became separated from the world.

Thus I prepared myself, distancing my ethos from the treachery in the world. Therefore - by explaining it either aloud or in secret - rectify my insufficiencies since you said you would impart Palingenesis to me.

Trismegistus, I am unknowing of what source a mortal is begotten and from what sown.

[2] My son, noetic sapientia is in silence, with the sowing the genuinely noble.

Father, that is completely impenetrable. So, of whom dispersed?

Of, my son, the desire of theos.

Father, of what kind then the begotten? For I do not share in such a quidditas and such a perceiveration.

Those begotten of theos are other than theos: young but entirely whole, mixion of all abilities.

Father, you speak enigmatically to me, not in the language of a teacher to a pupil.

My son, this emanation is not taught; rather, it is presenced by and when the theos desires.

[3] Father, while you speak of what is impractical and forced, I on my part seek what is straightforward. Was I produced as a foreign son of the paternal emanation? Do not repine me, father: I am a rightful son. Relate - plainly - the way of palingenesis.

My son, what is there to say? All that can be told is this: I saw an unshaped vista, brought-into-being through the generosity of theos, of me setting forth to a deathless body, and now I am not that before because engendered by perceiveration.

This matter is not taught: not through that shaped part through which is seeing. Thus and for me there is no concern for the initial mixturous form. It is not as if I am biochrome and have tactility and definity: I am a stranger to them. You, my son, now observe me with your eyes and directly see my physicality and perceptible form. And yet, my son, I am now not understandable with those eyes.

[4] Father, you have stung the heart, causing no minor distraction, for I cannot now perceive myself.

Would that you, my son, would - while not asleep - go beyond yourself as those who sleepfully dream.

Inform me also of this: who is the essentiator of the Palingenesis?

Through the desire of theos: The Mortal One, child of theos.

[5] Father, what you have now presented has silenced me, with a forsaking of what was previously in my heart <...> since I perceive that your stature and your likeness are still the same.

In that you have been deceived, for the form of the deathful alters every day: changed by the seasons, it grows then withers and so deceives.

[6] What then - Trismegistus - is the actuality?

My son: the imperturbable, the indistinguishable, the un-complexioned, the figureless, the steadfast, the unadorned, the revealed, the self-perceiving, the unwaveringly noble, the unmaterial.

Father, I am completely confused. Just when I considered you were engendering learning in me, the perceptibility of my apprehension was obstructed.

Thus it is, my son. It ascends, as Fire does, and descends, as Earth does, and

flows, as Water does, and is neumæos as is Air. But how can you apprehend through perception what is insubstantial, what is not flowing, what is unmixturous, what is undissolved; that which is only apprehensible through influence and actuosity, requiring someone able to apprehend that bringing-into-being within theos?

[7] Father, am I then deficient?

Not so, my son. Go within: and an arriving. Intend: and an engendering. Let physical perceptibility rest, and divinity will be brought-into-being. Refine yourself, away from the brutish Alastoras of Materies.

Alastoras are within me, then, father?

Not just a few, my son, but many and terrifying.

I do not apprehend them, father.

My son, one Vengeress is Unknowing; the second, Grief. The third, Unrestraint; the fourth, Lascivity. The fifth, Unfairness; the sixth, Coveter. The seventh, Deceit; the eighth, Envy. The ninth, Treachery; the tenth, Wroth. The eleventh, Temerity; the twelfth, Putridity.

In number, these are twelve but below them are numerous others who, my son, compel the inner mortal - bodily incarcerated - to suffer because of perceptibility. But they absent themselves - although not all at once - from those to whom theos is generous, which is what the Way and Logos of Palingenesis consists of.

[8] Henceforward, speak quietly, my son, and keep this secret. For thus may the generosity of theos toward us continue.

Henceforward, my son, be pleased, having refinement through the cræfts of theos to thus comprehend the Logos.

My son, to us: arrivance of Knowledge of Theos. On arrival: Unknowing is banished. My son, to us: arrivance of Knowledge of Delightfulness: on arriving, Grief runs away to those who have the room.

[9] The influence invoked following Delightfulness is Self-Restraint: a most pleasant influence. Let us, my son, readily welcome her: arriving, she immediately pushes Unrestraint aside.

The fourth invoked is Perseverance who is influxious against Lascivity. Which Grade, my son, is the foundation of Ancestral Custom: observe how without any deliberation Unfairness was cast out. My son, we are vindicated since Unfairness has departed.

The sixth influence invoked for us - against Coveter - is community. With that departed, the next invokation: Actualis, and thus - with Actualis presenced - does Deceit run away. Observe, my son, how with Actualis presenced and Envy absent, the noble has been returned. For, following Actualis, there is the noble, together with Life and Phaos.

No more does the retribution of Skotos supervene, for, vanquished, they whirlingly rush away.

[10] Thus, my son, you know the Way of Palingenesis. By the Dekad brought-into-being, geniture of apprehension was produced, banishing those twelve; and by this geniture we are of theos.

Thus whomsoever because of that generosity obtains divine geniture, having gone beyond physical perceptibility, discovers that they consist of such, and are pleased.

[11] With a quietude, father, engendered by theos, the seeing is not of the sight from the eyes but that through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air. I am in living beings, in plants; in the womb, before the womb, after the womb. Everywhere.

But speak to me about how the retributions of Skotos - which are twelve in number - are pushed aside by ten influences. What is that Way, Trismegistus?

[12] My son, this body which we have passed beyond is constituted from the circular Zodiac which is composed of beings, twelve in number and of the same physis, yet polymorphous in appearance so as to lead mortals astray. The difference between them, my son, becomes one when they act <...> Temerity united with Wroth, and indistinguishable.

It is probably correct to say that all of them withdraw when pushed away by those ten influences: that is, by the Dekad. For, my son, the Dekad is an effector of psyche, with Life and Phaos a unity there where the arithmos of the Henad is brought forth from the pneuma. Thus it is reasonable that the Henad contains the Dekad and the Dekad the Henad.

[13] Father, I observe All That Exists, and myself, in the perceiveration.

My son, this is the Palingenesis: to no more present the body in three separations, through this disclosure regarding Palingenesis, which I have written about for you alone so as not to be rouners of all these things to the many but instead to whomsoever theos himself desires.

[14] Inform me, father, if this body - constituted of such cræfts - is liable to dissipation.

Speak quietly and do not talk of deficiencies or you shall be in error with the eye of your perceiveration disrespectful. The perceptible body of physis is far away from the quidditas of geniture, for one is dissipative, the other is not-dissipative; one is deathful, the other deathless.

Do you not know that you are engendered of theos, as a child of The One, as am I?

[15] Father, my inclination is for the laudation of the song you said you heard from those influences when you reached the Ogdoad.

Just as, my son, Poemandres divined about the Ogdoad. It is noble of you to hasten to leave that dwelling for you are now refined. Poemandres, the perceiveration of authority, did not impart to me anything other than what is written, understanding that I would apprehended the entirety; hearing what I was inclined to, observing the entirety, and entrusting me to presence the beautiful. Thus do all those influences within me chant.

Father, I desire to hear them so that I might apprehend.

[16] Be quiet my son: now hear that most fitting laudation, the song of Palingenesis which I had chosen not to openly divulge except to you at your completion and which is not taught but concealed through silence.

Thus, my son, on your feet in a place open to the air look respectfully to the Southwind as Helios descends, as at the ascending and toward the Eastwind.

Be quiet my son.

Logos Δ. The Esoteric Song

[17] Let every Physis of Kosmos favourably listen to this song.
Gaia: be open, so that every defence against the Abyss is opened for me;
Trees: do not incurvate;
For I now will sing for the Master Artisan,
For All That Exists, and for The One.

Open: you Celestial Ones; and you, The Winds, be calm.
Let the deathless clan of theos accept this, my logos.
For I shall sing of the maker of everything;
Of who established the Earth,
Of who affixed the Heavens,

Of who decreed that Oceanus should bring forth sweet water
To where was inhabited and where was uninhabited
To so sustain all mortals;
Of who decreed that Fire should bring light
To divinities and mortals for their every use.

Let us all join in fond celebration of who is far beyond the Heavens:
That artisan of every Physis.

May the one who is the eye of perceiveration accept this fond celebration
From my Arts.

[18] Let those Arts within me sing for The One and for All That Exists
As I desire all those Arts within me to blend, together.

Numinous knowledge, from you a numinal understanding:
Through you, a song of apprehended phaos,
Delighted with delightful perceiverance.
Join me, all you Arts, in song.

You, mastery, sing; and you, respectful of custom,
Through me sing of such respect.
Sing, my companions, for All That Exists:
Honesty, through me, sing of being honest,
The noble, sing of nobility.

Phaos and Life: fond celebration spreads from us to you.

My gratitude, father: actuosity of those my Arts.
My gratitude, theos: Artisan of my actuosities;
Through me, the Logos is sung for you.
Through me, may Kosmos accept
Such respectful wordful offerings as this.

[19] Such is what the Arts within me loudly call out. They sing of All That Exists; they accomplish your desire. From you: deliberations; then to you, from All That Exists.

Accept from Kosmos - the Kosmos within us - respectful wordful offerings. Life, recure! Phaos, reveal! Theos, spiritus! For - Breath-Giver, Artisan - it is your Logos that Perceiveration guides.

[20] You are theos. Your mortal loudly calls out: through Fire, through Air, through Earth, through Water, through Pneuma, through your created beings.

To me, from your Aion, a laudation. And, through your deliberations, I discovered the repose that I seek. Because of your desire, I perceived.

[21] Father, I also have assigned the laudation you spoke of to my Kosmos.

My son, speak of "in the apprehended."

In the apprehended I am able to do, father. For me, through your song and your laudation, a more numinal perceiveration. And yet, there is a desire for me to convey from my own heart a laudation to theos.

My son, do not be incautious.

Father, what I behold in the perceiverance, I say. It is to theos, to you - essentiator of engenderment - that I, Thoth, convey wordful offerings. Theos, you the Father; you the Kyrios, you the Perceiveration, accept the respectful wordful offerings you desire. For, by your deliberations, all is accomplished.

My son, you convey an agreeable offering to theos, father of all. But you should add "through the Logos."

[22] My thanks to you, father, for your advice regarding the invokation.

My son, I am glad that the actuality has borne good fruit, the unrottable produce. Having learned of this from me, profess silence my son about this wonder, revealing to no one the tradition of the Palingenesis, for otherwise we will be regarded as rouners. Each of us has had a sufficiency of interest: I in speaking, you in listening. Through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father

°°°

Commentary

Title.

Ερμού του τρισμεγίστου προς τον υιόν Τάτ εν όρει λόγος απόκρυφος περί παλιγγενεσίας και σιγής επαγγελίας. On A Mountain: Hermes Trismegistus To His Son Thoth, An Esoteric Discourse Concerning Palingenesis And The Requirement of Silence.

Thoth. As in other tractates I translate Τάτ by Thoth, avoiding the conventional *Tat* which, in English, has a colloquial meaning inappropriate here. As to which 'Thoth' is meant, the consensus is that in this and some other tractates it refers to the son (possibly biologically or more probably metaphorically) of Hermes

Trismegistus who himself was named by the Greeks as Thoth, with the Τάτ of some other tractates being a scribal corruption of the name Thoth.

Esoteric Discourse. λόγος απόκρυφος. While 'esoteric' is an apt translation in regard to απόκρυφος, 'discourse' is not entirely satisfactory in respect of λόγος since it could be here interpreted to mean 'disclosure' or 'explanation'. However, given what follows in section 1 - πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν...παραδιδόναι μοι - 'discourse' seems appropriate.

Palingenesis. Rather than ascribe a particular meaning to παλιγγενεσία - such as 'rebirth' or 'regeneration' - I have chosen the English word palingenesis (from the Latin palingenesia) with that term explained by what follows in this particular discourse, qv. vv. 12 and 13.

Requirement. The sense of ἐπαγγελία here, given what is discussed in this tractate, is 'requirement' rather than the strident 'command' or what is implied by the rather vague word 'promise'.

1.

Father. The Greek ὦ πάτερ - literally 'my father' - is a polite form of address, akin to the English 'sir'. Similarly, ὦ τέκνον - 'my son' - is a polite reply. Given the esoteric nature of the text, a possible interpretation here of ὦ πάτερ would be 'Master', and of ὦ τέκνον 'my pupil'.

in the Exoterica. Ἐν τοῖς γενικοῖς. Since the term γενικῶν λόγων occurs in tractate X it is reasonable to assume that γενικός here refers to the same thing although the meaning of the term is moot given that no details are provided in this tractate nor in tractate X, nor in Stobaeus (Excerpts, III, 1 and VI, 1) where the terms also occurs. While most translators have assumed that it refers to 'generic' things or 'generalities' and thus (by adding λόγοι) have opted for an expression such as 'General Discourses', and given that a transliteration - such as genikois or genikoi - is awkward, I have in respect of the γενικοὶ opted for exoterica (from the Latin via the Greek τὰ ἐξωτερικά) with the meaning of "exoteric treatises designed for or suitable to the generality of disciples or students," with the plausible suggestion thus being that there are exoteric Hermetic treatises and esoteric Hermetic treatises, with Reitzenstein describing these other treatises as διεξοδικοί λόγοι (R.A. Reitzenstein. *Poimandres*. Teubner, Leipzig. 1904. p.118) a distinction he also mentioned in his later work *Die Hellenistischen Mysterien Religionen*.

passing over the mountain. I follow the MSS and read μεταβάσεως rather than the emendation καταβάσεως, taking the sense of μεταβάσεως here as "passing over" - walking on and over - the mountain. There seems no need for the emendation - which implies a descent from the mountain - with its possible suggestion of something more symbolic, more religious or mystical, having

occurred, as for example might be implied in the Gospel of John with the juxtaposition of κατέβη and ἀνέβη in chapter one vv.12-13, with Thomas Aquinas writing:

> "Sed non vacat a mysterio, quod in Capharnaum descendit, et postmodum Ierosolymam ascendit. Nisi enim descendisset primum, non competisset ei ascendere: quia, ut dicitur Eph. IV, 10, qui descendit, ipse est et qui ascendit." *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, Caput II, Lectio 1
>
> That he descended to Capernaum and then ascended to Jerusalem is not without its mystery since if he did not first descend he would not have been able to then ascend, for as has been related (Eph. IV, 10) "The one who descended is the same as the one who ascended."

the discourse on palingenesis. The Greek word translated here as 'discourse' is λόγος, as in the title.

imparted to me. παραδίδωμι carries the sense here of 'handing down' - of transmitting, disclosing - some ancestral teaching or wisdom; a disclosing from master to pupil.

separated from the world. In respect of ἀπαλλοτριόω what is implied is not 'alienated' from (which has too many modern connotations) the world (κόσμος), but rather 'separate' - distanced - from the world, from worldly things, as a mystic is often 'otherworldly' and may seem to be - to others, and to themselves - a stranger in the world.

distancing my ethos. Reading ἀπηλλοτρίωσα (with Parthey, et al) not the emendation of Nock (ἀπηνδρείωσα) with φρόνημα here suggestive of one's character and especially of one's "way of thinking", one's weltanschauung: that is, the 'spirit' or ethos which guides one's way of life.

treachery. ἀπάτης. Personified in Hesiod's Theogony as a child of Night (Νὺξ) along with "darksome Kir and Death" - Κῆρα μέλαιναν καὶ Θάνατον - and Nemesis, Νέμεσις.

rectify my insufficiencies. τὰ ὑστερήματα ἀναπλήρωσον. An alternative, literal, translation would be "supply what is needed."

since you said you would impart Palingenesis to me. Given the somewhat unusual phrasing here - οἷς ἔφης μοι παλιγγενεσίας παραδοῦναι, which led Nock to add γένεσιν after παλιγγενεσίας - it seems that παλιγγενεσίας is the title given to a particular doctrine or esoteric theory rather than just a term such as 'rebirth'. Hence my capitalization.

what source ... what sown. The metaphysical context - and the reply - suggests that both μήτρας and σπορᾶς are meant metaphorically rather than literally

(womb, seed).

mortal. As in other tractates I translate ἄνθρωπος as 'mortal' rather than as 'man'. Which here - as in other tractates - suits both the Hellenic context, of mortals contrasted with the immortal theos and the immortal theoi, and the metaphysical context of immortality being possibly attainable by select mortals.

2.

noetic sapientia. For a variety of reasons, I have used the term *noetic sapientia* to denote σοφία νοερὰ.

i) The metaphysical terms νοῦς νοερός, νοῦς οὐσιώδης, and νοῦς ζωτικός occur in Proclus, qv. *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentari*, Volume 5, Book 4, 245-247; *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, II 733 and IV 887. Interestingly, Proclus associates νοερός with the three 'septenary planets' Mercury, Venus, and the Sun.

Here, σοφία νοερὰ may well suggest a particular hermetic principle which requires contextual interpretation.

ii) As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 29 - where I used the Latin *sapientia* in respect of σοφία - in some contexts the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context given what the English term 'wisdom' now, in common usage and otherwise, often denotes. As in the Poemandres tractate *sapientia* (for σοφία) requires contextual - a philosophical - interpretation, as Sophia (for σοφία) does in tractate XI where it is there suggestive, as with Aion, Kronos, and Kosmos, of a personified metaphysical principle.

iii) In respect of νοερός, the English word 'intellectual' has too many irrelevant modern connotations, with phrases such as 'intellectual wisdom' and 'the wisdom that understands' - for σοφία νοερὰ - unhelpful regarding suggesting a relevant philosophical meaning. Hence the use of the term 'noetic' which suggests a particular type of apprehension - a perceiveration - whereby certain knowledge and a particular understanding can be ascertained.

Thus, *noetic sapientia* implies that the knowledge and understanding that is noetically acquired transcends - or at least is different from - that acquired both (a) through observation of and deductions concerning phenomena and (b) through the use of denotatum whereby beings are given 'names' and assigned to abstractive categories with such naming and such categories assumed to provide knowledge and understanding of the physis of those beings. [In respect of physis, qv. the comment on φύσεως μιᾶς in section 12.]

In addition, given what follows - ἐν σιγῇ, 'in silence' - such knowledge and understanding does not require nor depend upon words whether they be spoken

or written or thought. Hence, the 'source' of mortals is in, can be known and understood through, the silence of noetic sapientia.

genuine. In respect of ἀληθινός as 'genuine', cf. Poemandres 30, ἀληθινὴ ὅρασις.

noble. Regarding ἀγαθός as 'noble/nobility/honour', qv. my commentary on Poemandres 22 and my essays *Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum* and *Cicero On Summum Bonum*.

of whom dispersed. To express the meaning of the Greek, to avoid gender bias and because of the following παῖς, I have here used the plural rather than the singular, those avoiding expressions such as "I do not share/he does not share" and "he that is begotten of theos." This also has the advantage of avoiding a misapprehension such as "the begotten one will be different, a god, a son of god."

the desire of theos. In respect of θέλημα here, qv. v.18, συνάσατε τῷ θελήματί μου πᾶσαι αἱ ἐν ἐμοὶ δυνάμεις.

quidditas. οὐσία. As at tractates XI:2 and VI:1, quidditas is a more appropriate translation of οὐσία rather than either 'essence' or 'substance'. Quidditas is post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity, and here as in those tractates should be understood as a philosophical term requiring contextual interpretation. One possible interpretation of quidditas here as at VI:1 is 'the being of that being/entity', with such quidditas often presenced in - and perceived via or as - φύσις (physis).

such a perceiveration. I have followed the MSS and translated καὶ τῆς νοητῆς, omitted by Nock et al. In respect of νοητῆς, cf. Plutarch on the views of Krantor of Soli regarding psyche: μιγνύντι τὴν ψυχὴν ἔκ τε τῆς νοητῆς καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ δοξαστῆς φύσεως (De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo, 1).

In respect of νοῦς as perceiveration/perceiverance, qv. my commentary on the Poemandres tractate.

entirely whole. τὸ πᾶν ἐν παντί. A literal translation - "the all in all" - does not in its blandness (and the fact that "all in all" is a colloquialism) convey the meaning of the Greek, which considering what follows is suggestive of "entirely whole."

mixion of all abilities. ἐκ πασῶν δυνάμεων συνεστώς. Mixion - a variant spelling of mixtion, meaning melded, compounded, combined, composed of - is most suitable for συνεστώς given the metaphysical matters discussed.

a teacher to a pupil. ὦ τέκνον and ὦ πάτερ not here literally referring to how a father should converse with his son but rather to a teacher instructing a pupil,

with the pupil expecting the teacher to explain matters clearly rather than by means of riddles.

emanation. I incline toward the view that γένος (which is literally, 'kind', species, race, folk, breed) is used here as a technical term which - given what follows, ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναμιμνήσκεται, and the fact that it is not feasible for one mortal to impart knowledge about it to another mortal - here implies a particular 'emanation' of theos; a knowing of which one has to, as Hermes goes on to describe, experience for it to be properly understood. Such 'emanations of theos' are described in the Poemandres tractate where they are symbolized by a septenary system and the two "immortal" (acausal) realms which await for mortals beyond those seven spheres, with knowledge of these emanations being acquired by the ἄνοδος (anados, the upward journey) from the deathful realms to the realms of the deathless.

The term emanation also has the advantage of connotating the literal meaning of γένος since an 'emanation' is derived from a particular kind, breed, or lineage.

presenced. The term 'presenced' is from the noun 'presencing' (derived from the Latin praesentia) and means "the action or process of making some-thing manifest and/or present and/or established."

ἀναμιμνήσκω is a very interesting word to use and one which has a variety of meanings depending on context, and thus does not always impute something to do with either 'mind' or with 'memory' as those English terms are now often understood with their implications of those 'things' having some sort of an existence 'somewhere' - in the case of 'memory' as a faculty of the 'mind' - and/or as quantifiable 'things'.

In the world of ancient heroes and warriors, as evoked by Homer, it is simply a 'mentioning' of something:

> ὦ φίλ᾽, ἐπεὶ δὴ ταῦτά μ᾽ ἀνέμνησας καὶ ἔειπες,
> φασὶ μνηστῆρας σῆς μητέρος εἵνεκα πολλοὺς
> ἐν μεγάροις ἀέκητι σέθεν κακὰ μηχανάασθαι
>
> My friend - since you have, in speaking to me, mentioned this,
> There are indeed rumours of many suitors for your mother being in your home
> Against your will who are plotting to do you harm.
>
> (Homer, The Odyssey, Book III, 321-323)

In Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles it implies a 'seeing again' of things past:

> ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ σαφῶς
> ἀγνῶτ᾽ ἀναμνήσω νιν. εὖ γὰρ οἶδ᾽ ὅτι
> κάτοιδεν, ἧμος τῷ Κιθαιρῶνος τόπῳ,

ὁ μὲν διπλοῖσι ποιμνίοις, ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἑνί,
ἐπλησίαζον τῷδε τἀνδρὶ τρεῖς ὅλους
ἐξ ἦρος εἰς ἀρκτοῦρον ἑκμήνους χρόνους

But I shall bring light
Upon those things which are now unknown. For well do I know
That he will see again that region of Cithaeron when he
With a double flock and I with one
Were neighbours and comrades for three entire six month
Durations from Spring to Arcturus.

(1131-1137)

In this tractate, the implication of ἀναμιμνήσκω is of theos - literally, given the definite article, τοῦ θεοῦ, *the* theos - presencing in the mortal (and thus gifting them with) the required understanding/knowledge of the emanation, just as theos has gifted mortals with sentience, cf. θεοῦ δωρεᾶς in IV:5, ἐλλόγιμος in tractate XI:7 and Asclepius 16, "Prouisum cautumque est, quantum rationabiliter potuisset a summo deo, tunc cum sensu, disciplina, intellegentia mentes hominum est munerare dignatus. Hisce enim rebus, quibus ceteris antestamus animalibus."

3.

unshaped. ἄπλαστον. A privation of πλάσσω, hence 'without invention, pretence, form; not manufactured, unadorned, unfashioned, without shape.' Cf. the irony of Lucian in *De Morte Peregrini* 10, πηλὸς γὰρ ἔτι ἄπλαστος ἦν καὶ οὐδέπω ἐντελὲς ἄγαλμα ἡμῖν δεδημιούργητο, for he was then formless clay with that glorious depiction not yet complete.

What is unshaped (form-less) is the vista - the view - seen, with there being no need, in my view, to impute that Hermes is here speaking of having had a 'vision', mystical, prophetic, or otherwise, given that a 'vision' is not by its nature of what is 'form-less' but of some-thing or some-things perceived and which therefore, being seen, have form or forms, qv. the mention of οὐδὲ τῷ πλαστῷ τούτῳ στοιχείῳ and of εἶδος which follow.

through the generosity of theos. ἐξ ἐλέου θεοῦ. Literally, "from the generosity of theos." Considering the metaphysical context, I incline toward the view that ἐλεός here is neither mercy - qv. Oedipus Tyrannus 672, ἐποικτίρω στόμα ἐλεινόν οὗτος δ᾽ ἔνθ᾽ ἂν ᾖ στυγήσεται - nor 'pity' (cf. Oedipus Tyrannus 180, νηλέα δὲ γένεθλα πρὸς πέδῳ θαναταφόρα κεῖται ἀνοίκτως) but rather 'generosity' in the sense of Matthew 12:7, τί ἐστιν Ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν, "I seek generosity and not sacrifice" with such 'generosity' (of deed and spirit) not exactly the same as what the word 'compassion' now implies, given the post-Hellenic and especially the contemporary connotations of the word 'compassion'.

setting forth ... engendered by perceiveration. καὶ ἐμαυτὸν ἐξελήλυθα εἰς ἀθάνατον σῶμα, καί εἰμι νῦν οὐχ ὁ πρίν, ἀλλ΄ ἐγεννήθην ἐν νῷ. This passage is usually interpreted in a way which suggests that Hermes is describing some kind of ancient 'astral travel' where he goes "out of himself" and thence "into" a deathless body, ἀθάνατον σῶμα (in respect of θάνατος and ἀθάνατος as deathful and deathless, qv. my commentary on Poemandres 14 and on vv. 1 and 2 of tractate XI).

However, I take the passage more literally, especially given the phrase εἰμι νῦν οὐχ ὁ πρίν, "now I am not the/that before," and the mention of having been produced/engendered/grown by perceiveration. That is, Hermes has "seen" - intuitively perceived, had an insight into - what deathlessness means and implies and is not the person he was before, having acquired (or been given, by theos) the gift of understanding that perceiveration engenders, for as mentioned in tractate IV:4

> βάπτισον σεαυτὴν ἡ δυναμένη εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ πιστεύουσα ὅτι ἀνελεύσηι πρὸς τὸν καταπέμψαντα τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ γνωρίζουσα ἐπὶ τί γέγονας. ὅσοι μὲν οὖν συνῆκαν τοῦ κηρύγματος καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τέλειοι ἐγένοντο ἄνθρωποι, τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι
>
> If you have strength enough, immerse yourself in the chaldron
> Should you accept you can ascend -
> Having discovered how you came-into-being -
> To the one who dispatched down that chaldron.
> The many who understood that declaration and were immersive with perceiveration
> Gained a certain knowledge, becoming more complete mortals
> Through having received the perceiveration

shaped part. A direct contrast with the previous use of πλάσσω in respect of what was seen.

thus and for me there is no concern for the initial mixturous form. διὸ καὶ ἠμέληταί μοι τὸ πρῶτον σύνθετον εἶδος. What there is no concern for is the causal form (εἶδος) of the mortal body, mixturous and formful as it is (in respect of mixturous, qv. the note on *mixion* in v. 2) and given that such an initial form will, by palingenesis, be changed.

not as if. Reading οὐχ ὅτι with the MSS; literally, "not as though." Cf. John 6:46 οὐχ ὅτι τὸν πατέρα ἑώρακέν τις.

biochrome ... definity. I take κέχρῳσμαι καὶ ἀφὴν ἔχω καὶ μέτρον, ἀλλότριος δὲ τούτων εἰμί metaphorically, not literally, with (i) κέχρῳσμαι implying not colour per se but rather biochromy, the natural or the apparent (observed) colouration of living beings, and (ii) μέτρον suggestive not of "measure" but rather of 'definity' in reference to 'indefinity' (from the noun indefinitude) and thus implying, in this context, 'beyond being definable' by ordinary, causal, means

such as 'measure' and 'weight' and 'determinability' and 'definement'.

and directly see my physicality and perceptible form. While various emendations have been suggested for the readings of the MSS here, including δέ εἰμι between ὅ τι δέ and κατανοεῖς, the general meaning seems clear: to directly see or fix or to concentrate one's eyes, one's gaze on (ἀτενίζω) the outward form (εἶδος) which here is the body, the physical appearance, the physicality of the person.

But, as Hermes goes on to explain - οὐκ ὀφθαλμοῖς τούτοις θεωροῦμαι νῦν - what is so observed by the physical eyes does not provide an understanding - a perception, a seeing - of what he is now as a result of the "unshaped vista" that he, through the generosity of theos, saw of himself "setting forth to a deathless body." In respect of θεωρέω, cf. John 4:19, λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, Κύριε, θεωρῶ ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ, "the woman said to him: Sir, I deem you are a prophet."

4.

Father, you have stung the heart, plunging me into no minor distraction, for I cannot now perceive myself. Εἰς μανίαν με οὐκ ὀλίγην καὶ οἴστρησιν φρενῶν ἐνέσεισας, ὦ πάτερ· ἐμαυτὸν γὰρ νῦν οὐχ ὁρῶ.

My translation is quite different from previous ones - such as Copenhaver's "you have driven me quite mad, father, and you have deranged my heart. Now I do not see myself" - for the following reasons.

i) Does μανία, in the context of this particular tractate, equate to what the English terms 'mania' and 'madness' now denote, as for example - in the case of mania - in 'obsessive need or enthusiasm', 'mood disorder', and - in the case of madness - 'mental illness', psychosis, lack of restraint, uncontrollable fury, uncontrollable mental turmoil, or even in the colloquial sense of 'cool' or quirkily interesting?

It is my considered opinion that it does not, but rather denotes what is suggested by Acts 26:24-25 especially given the use there of μαίνομαι,

> Ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπολογουμένου ὁ Φῆστος μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ φησίν Μαίνῃ, Παῦλε· τὰ πολλά σε γράμματα εἰς μανίαν περιτρέπει. ὁ δὲ Παῦλος Οὐ μαίνομαι, φησίν, κράτιστε Φῆστε, ἀλλὰ ἀληθείας καὶ σωφροσύνης ῥήματα ἀποφθέγγομαι.
>
> Speaking up for himself, Festus, in a very loud voice, said: "Paul, you are distracted. Your extensive learning has brought you to distraction." But Paul replied: "Noble Festus, I am not beside myself for the words I have spoken are restrained and truthful."

ii) In respect of οἴστρησιν I am rather reminded of the usage of οἴστρημα in Oedipus Tyrannus, 1318,

> οἴμοι μάλ᾽ αὖθις: οἷον εἰσέδυ μ᾽ ἅμα κέντρων τε τῶνδ᾽ οἴστρημα καὶ μνήμη κακῶν
>
> as do the stings of those goads, and the recalling of those troubles, pierce me

where the transitive senses of *goad* include "to cause annoyance or discomfort; to spur someone on, or 'to sting' or to prod someone to provoke them into responding."

Thus, with φρήν taken as a metaphor for the heart, one has the contextually apposite *stung the heart,* rather than completely out of context phrases such as "mind frenzy" or "mad".

iii) ἐμαυτὸν γὰρ νῦν οὐχ ὁρῶ. Not a literal 'cannot see' but rather 'cannot comprehend who or what I - as a being - am," as a consequence of what Hermes has just said about his own being. Hence, *I cannot now perceive myself*.

go beyond. In respect of διεξελήλυθας, not here implying to "pass through", or "come out" (of yourself) but "go - or pass - beyond" (yourself) as those sleepfully dreaming often in their dreams travel far beyond where they are sleeping.

essentiator. The entity, person, or divinity, who essentiates; that is, who is the genesis of, who is the essence of, and who gives being to - who 'authors' and who fashions - the Palingenesis. Which 16th century English word expresses the meaning here of the Greek term γενεσιουργός. Cf. δημιουργός - 'artisan' - in Poemandres 24.

*The Mortal One, child of theo*s. Ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς, ἄνθρωπος εἷς, θελήματι θεοῦ. In respect of ἄνθρωπος εἷς, literally, *Essentialist Mortal*. That is, the primatial, or 'archetypal', human being. In respect of Ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς, cf. v. 2: τοῦ θελήματος τοῦ θεοῦ...ὸ γεννώμε νος θεοῦ θεὸς παῖς, with παῖς not restricted to 'son' but implying the child - and hence the children, the youthful - of *the* theos, with the conventional translation here of 'son of god' imposing a particular meaning on the text and thus inviting as it may unwarranted comparisons with aspects of Christian theology.

5.

silenced. In regard to ἀφασίαν, qv. Euripides, Helen, 548-9,

> ὡς δέμας δείξασα σὸν ἔκπληξιν ἡμῖν ἀφασίαν τε προστίθης
>
> I am mortified, silenced, by you imposing such a bodily appearance upon me

in my heart <...> since I perceive. It is possible that Reitzenstein's assumption - in *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*. Teubner, Leipzig, 1927 - of a lacuna here is correct, although it is perhaps more probable to interpret what Thoth has just said - that he perceives the stature and the features of Hermes are still the same - accounts for him "forsaking what was previously in his heart," because he now believes that Hermes was speaking metaphorically in regard to being a stranger to "tactility and definity." Which is why, after the reply from Hermes, Thoth goes on to ask τί οὖν ἀληθές ἐστιν (what, then, is the actuality) and then, after the reply from Hermes, says Μέμηνα ὄντως.

the seasons. As elsewhere, χρόνος is not some abstract 'time' but rather the duration or durations between certain observable events or changes, often measured by such things as the phases of the moon or by the appearance or disappearance of constellations or certain stars in the night sky. Here, it refers to the seasons of Nature and how, over the seasons, mortals - and crops - grow then wither.

6.

What then - Trismegistus - is the actuality? Τί οὖν ἀληθές ἐστιν¸ ὦ Τρισμέγιστε. In respect of ἀλήθεια I have - as in translations of other Hermetic tractates, such as Poemandres 31 and XI:1 - eschewed the conventional translation of 'truth' (with its implication of some abstract, impersonal, and disputable, meaning) in favour of a contextual interpretation, mindful as I am of John 18:38 - τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια, Quid est veritas? - which well expresses a Greco-Roman sentiment.

The English term is derived from the classical Latin *actualis* and, in this context, refers to what is real, what has actual being or is a demonstrable fact.

the un-complexioned...the unmaterial. There are two ways of construing what follows. As an impersonal list of philosophical attributes - such as formless, colourless - or metaphorically as personal qualities associated with or relevant to the quest for palingenesis, and while most translators have chosen the first option I incline toward the view that, given the personal context - of what Hermes has said, "directly see my physicality," and about how "the form of the deathful alters every day" - they signify personal qualities. These personal qualities, such as τὸ ἀσχημάτιστον and τὸ ἀσώματον are echoed in the *De Imaginibus Oratio* of Iohannes Damascenus (written c. 730 CE) when he enumerates the qualities of God.

Here, and for example,

i) *the un-complexioned*. τὸ ἀχρώματον, qv. ἄχροος, the opposite of εὔχροος, cf. Xenophon, Cyropaedia, Book VIII, 1.41 ὡς εὐχροώτεροι ὁρῷντο ἢ πεφύκασιν. An alternative to 'un-complexioned' would be 'hueless'.

ii) *the figureless*. τὸ ἀσχημάτιστον. That is, of no particular physique. Qv. Iohannes Damascenus, *De Imaginibus Oratio* I: 4. (Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 94). Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Book VIII, 3.59, sunt inornata et haec: quod male dispositum est, id ἀνοικονόμητον, quod male figuratum, id ἀσχημάτιστον quod male collocatum.

iii) *the unadorned*. τὸ γυμνόν. Not literally 'naked' or unclothed, but a metaphor for 'unadorned'.

iv) *the revealed*. τὸ φαῖνον. While the literal sense here is problematic - cf. Herodotus, II, 71.1, χαυλιόδοντας φαῖνον, and Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1229, τὰ δ᾽ αὐτίκ᾽ εἰς τὸ φῶς φανεῖ, "soon to be exposed to the light" - what seems to be suggested metaphorically is 'the visible', 'the (already) revealed', and thus someone who is conspicuously (luminously) open and honest and has nothing to hide that might, to their detriment, be exposed. Cf. τὸν ἐπιτάξαντα πῦρ φανῆναι in v. 17 and the quotation there from Plato, Timaeus, 39b.

v) *the self-perceiving*. τὸ αὐτῷ καταληπτόν. That is, the self-apprehended, the self-aware, person.

vi) *the unwaveringly noble*. τὸ ἀναλλοίωτον ἀγαθόν. Qv. τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀγαθόν, ὕμνει in v. 18.

vii) *the unmaterial*. τὸ ἀσώματον. The personal sense is well-expressed in a 14th century translation of 'De Proprietatibus Rerum' in which the qualities of an angel are explained: "inasmuch as he is farre from the bondage of earthly matter, insomuch he is the more perfect in contemplation of spirituall and unmateriall thinges." (Book I, ii. ii. 60). In respect of the term as applied to God, qv. Iohannes Damascenus, *De Imaginibus Oratio* I: 4. Cf. Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, V, 15, 1-4,

> Vetus atque perpetua quaestio inter nobilissimos philosophorum agitata est, corpusne sit vox an incorporeum. Hoc enim vocabulum quidam finxerunt proinde quod Graece dicitur ἀσώματον. Corpus autem est quod aut efficient est aut patiens; id Graece definitur τὸ ἤτοι ποιοῦν ἢ πάσχον. Quam definitionem significare volens, Lucretius poeta ita scripsit: Tangere enim aut tangi, nisi corpus, nulla potest res.

I am completely confused. Μέμηνα ὄντως. Just as in v. 4, the context does not support Thoth saying - even rhetorically - something such as "I have gone mad" or "I am really deranged" considering what the English words "mad" and "deranged" now impute. The sense here - given what follows, ἐνεφράχθησαν αἱ αἰσθήσεις τούτου μου τοῦ νοήματος - is rather of being completely confused, befuddled, and thus lost because of what Hermes has just said. Cf. John 10:20, Δαιμόνιον ἔχει καὶ μαίνεται τί αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε - "why listen to him? He bears a

daemon and is not himself" - with its suggestion that not only is the person completely confused but also that it is not him who is speaking (or, more probably, not he who is ranting) but the daemon he carries around and thus is "possessed" by.

the perceptibility of my apprehension was obstructed. ἐνεφράχθησαν αἱ αἰσθήσεις τούτου μου τοῦ νοήματος. Although the Greek is somewhat obscure, the general sense is that his perception - his understanding - of what he thought Hermes was explaining is now gone, having been obstructed, lost, because of his confusion.

and flows, as Water does, and is neumæos as is Air. The meaning here of ὑγρός and σύμπνοος are uncertain, with the context, the mention of elemental Fire, Earth, Water, and Air, perhaps indicative of them being technical (esoteric) hermetic terms rather than having their normal (exoteric) meaning of 'moist/wet' and 'breathing together' respectively.

i) In regard to ὑγρός, qv. Poemandres 4, where the context - ἀφάτως τεταραγμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδι δοῦσαν - implies flowing, Cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds,* 314 - ταῦτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐποίουν ὑγρᾶν Νεφελᾶν στρεπταιγλᾶν δάιον ὁρμάν - where clouds are described as flowing and in their flowing-moving obscure the brightness (of the day).

ii) In regard to σύμπνοος, qv. Περὶ Εἱμαρμένης attributed to Plutarch - τὸ φύσει διοικεῖσθαι τόνδε τὸν κόσμον σύμπνουν καὶ συμπαθῆ αὐτὸν αὐτῷ ὄντα (574e) - literally meaning that the Kosmos is συμπαθῆ with itself and mutually breathing (σύμπνους), with the implication that it is a wholistic living being. Hence, here - given such a conjectured esoteric meaning as "breathfully connected" - a suitable interpretation of καὶ σύμπνοον ὡς ἀήρ would be *and is as breathfully connected as Air,* with 'breath' indicative of πνεῦμα as described in Poemandres 5 and XII:18.

However, a better alternative might be to provide a suitable technical term, open to interpretation, to express whatever esoteric meaning of σύμπνοος is conjectured, with my suggestion being neumæos, from the medieval Latin neumæ using the suffix -os derived from the Greek -ός, with one possible interpretation therefore being 'something' possibly pertaining to πνεῦμα', giving thus the translation *and is neumæos, as is Air.*

insubstantial. τὸ μὴ σκληρόν does not imply the literal what "is not hard" but rather the metaphorical what is 'insubstantial', whose form is thus not solid, not firm, but non-substantial and which therefore cannot be correctly known through touch and sight.

unmixturous. The meaning of ἀσφίγγωτος is unclear since it occurs only here, with suggestions ranging from 'not fastened', 'not bound', 'not tight', and 'loose'. However, I am inclined to accept Scott's emendation of ἀσύνθετον - qv. τὸ

πρῶτον σύνθετον εἶδος (the initial mixturous/composed form) in v. 3 - giving thus unmixturous, not composite.

undissolved. Reading διαλυόμενον with Parthey et al.

actuosity. ἐνέργεια. Qv. tractate XII:21. The English term actuosity derives from the classical Latin actuosus and expresses the Greek here better than the word 'energy' given the modern connotations of that word. The meaning is of (often vigorous) activity or occurrences either natural or which result from the actions of divinities or daimons or mortals.

that bringing-into-being within theos. τὴν ἐν θεῷ γένεσιν. Cf. Poemandres 26, ἐν θεῷ γίνονται. Both imply a "uniting with theos" to thus 'become-of' what is no longer mortal but rather both deathless and 'of theos'.

7.

Refine yourself. As often in other hermetic tractates - qv. Poemandres 10, 22, and VI:3 - καθαρός signifies not just the literal 'physically clean' but being 'refined' in terms of appearance, behaviour, manners, cleanliness, speech, learning, and thought.

brutish. Given the metaphysical context, and the contrast with καθαρός, ἄλογος implies more than 'irrational' or 'unreasonable'. The sense is of the unrefined, the uncultured, the brutish.

alastoras. Since the Greek word τιμωρία is specific and personal, implying vengeance, retribution, and also a divine punishment, it seems apposite to try and keep, in English, the personal sense even though no specific deeds or deeds are mentioned in the text, but especially because of what follows: Τιμωροὺς γὰρ ἐν ἐμαυτῷ ἔχω, ὦ πάτερ. Hence my interpretation, "the brutish alastoras of Materies," using the English term alastoras - singular, *alastor*, from the Greek ἀλάστωρ, an avenging deity, and also a person who avenges certain deeds. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 1497-1508.

materies. ὕλη. A variant form of the Latin *materia*, thus avoiding the English word 'matter' which now has connotations, derived from sciences such as Physics, that are not or may not be relevant here. In addition, the term requires contextual, metaphysical, interpretation, for as used here it may or may not be equivalent to the ὕλη of Poemandres 10, of III:1, και τα λοιπά. Hence why I have here chosen 'materies' rather than - as in those other tractates - 'substance'.

unknowing. In respect of ἀγνοέω here, 'unknowing' is a more suitable English word than 'ignorance', given its meaning, usage (past - as in the *Cloud of*

Unknowing - and present) and given the context. Cf. Poemandres 27, ἀγνωσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, and Poemandres 32, ἐν ἀγνοίαι τοῦ γένους.

Vengerisse. A personification here in respect of one of the alastoras, rather than impersonally assumptive words such as 'torment/punishment' which in my opinion do not fully express the ethos of the Greek. Vengerisse is an alternative spelling of *Vengeress*: a woman who exacts vengeance, who does deeds of retribution; from the Latin *vindicare* via the Anglo-Norman *venger* whence the word *vengeance*. The spelling *vengerisse* occurs in Chaucer's 1374 translation of De Consolatione Philosophiae.

The personifications which follow - ἄγνοια, ἀκρασία, κ.τ.λ. - designate (i) the particular deed or deeds that the alastor in question has arrived to avenge, and/or (ii) the character trait or traits which has or have drawn that particular alastor to a person in order torment them and exact vengeance, retribution.

In the case of ἄγνοια, the suggestion therefore seems to be that this is wilful unknowing, born out of arrogance.

Unrestraint. ἀκρασία. In relation to a person, the Greek means 'lack of control' and thus implies someone who cannot restrain themselves and thus who is self-indulgent; and it is somewhat unfortunate that some translators have opted here to use the word 'incontinence' given what that English word imputes in medical terms.

Unfairness. In respect of δίκη as fairness, and personified as a goddess, qv. Hesiod, Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι, 213-218,

> σὺ δ᾽ ἄκουε δίκης, μηδ᾽ ὕβριν ὄφελλε:
> ὕβρις γάρ τε κακὴ δειλῷ βροτῷ: οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλὸς
> 215 ῥηιδίως φερέμεν δύναται, βαρύθει δέ θ᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς
> ἐγκύρσας ἄτῃσιν: ὁδὸς δ᾽ ἑτέρηφι παρελθεῖν
> κρείσσων ἐς τὰ δίκαια: Δίκη δ᾽ ὑπὲρ Ὕβριος ἴσχει
> ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα: παθὼν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω
>
> You should listen to Fairness and not oblige Hubris
> Since Hubris harms unfortunate mortals while even the more fortunate
> Are not equal to carrying that heavy a burden, meeting as they do with Mischief.
> The best path to take is the opposite one: that of honour
> For, in the end, Fairness is above Hubris
> Which is something the young come to learn from adversity.

Putridity. The Greco-Roman sense of κακία is personal, not abstract, imputing rottenness: a rotten, putrid, bad physis (character, nature, disposition). This bad physis is revealed by personal deeds, such as cowardice, malice, corruption, depravity, and hubris.

inner mortal. ἐνδιάθετον ἄνθρω. In respect of ἐνδιάθετος, an alternative to 'inner' would be 'enclosed', with the Greek word occurring in relation to Stoic philosophy where a distinction was sometimes made (qv. Theophilus of Antioch) between λόγος ἐνδιάθετος (the inner or 'esoteric' logos) and λόγος προφορικός (the outer or 'exoteric' logos).

incarcerated. The Greek word used, δεσμωτήριον, is interesting as it does not imply a 'prison' as the word prison is mostly conceived of today, a large building in which people are confined together. Composed as the Greek is from δεσμός (bonds, shackles) and τηρέω (watch, guard) it signifies a place where a person is guarded and shackled, as for example in medieval dungeons. Occurring as the word does in conjunction with σῶμα (body) and ἀναγκάζω (compel, using force including torture) the suggestion seems to be of the alastoras tormenting or torturing a person while that person is confined, incarcerated, within their mortal body. Cf. John 3:24, βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν, which implies a forceful 'throwing' or a hurling into a guarded cage, not "cast into prison."

generous. Qv. the comment on ἐξ ἐλέου θεοῦ in v. 3.

which is what the way and logos of Palingenesis consists of. καὶ οὕτω συνίσταται ὁ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τρόπος καὶ λόγος. Literally, "and thus consists the way and logos of the Palingenesis." Since the meaning of λόγος here is a matter of conjecture, I have transliterated it, although I incline toward the view that here it is used as a metaphysical term as in the Poemandres, as for example in v. 9, λόγῳ ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν, "whose logos brought forth another perceiveration," and as in Cyrilli Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium:

> μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος ὁ ἐξ αὐτῆς γεννηθεὶς τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός ὁ ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεὸς ἀληθινός τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φωτός ὁ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο τά τε ἐν τῶι οὐρανῶι καὶ τὰ ἐν τῆι γῆι
>
> only-offspring of the logos of theos, born from the essence [οὐσία] of the father, genuine theos from genuine theos, the phaos from the phaos, by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being

8.

Speak quietly...and keep this secret. σιώπησον...καὶ εὐφήμησον. Not a literal 'keep silent and do not say anything' since it is a formulaic phrase, with εὐφημέω suggestive of 'speak softly/quietly' due to either religions reverence (cf. VIII:5, XIII:8, κ.τ.λ.) or personal politeness/deference, and with σιωπάω suggestive of 'keep secret'.

Henceforward be pleased. The English word 'rejoice' - in respect of χαίρω - is

unsuitable here given the preceding εὐφημέω, and the association of the word with Christian worship past and present where it implies 'exult' and show/feel 'great joy'.

having refinement through the Cræfts of theos. ἀνακαθαιρό μενος ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεσιν. Regarding καθαρός as implying 'refinement', qv. the comment on v. 7.

Cræft - the older spelling, meaning, and pronunciation of craft - is, when so spelled, appropriate in reference to the use of δύναμις in this tractate, implying as it does, in an exoteric context, what the terms strength/power/force denote, while implying in an esoteric context (as often in this tractate) a particular Arte, the application of particular abilities, skills, and knowledge, especially abilities, skills, and knowledge learned in the traditional manner from a master or from a mistress of the Arte or Arts in question. In this esoteric sense, theos is the Master Craftsman, with Palingenesis being a Cræft, an Arte, that can be taught and learned. A Cræft is thus - for an individual - an ability, a capability, while it can also be, in respect of others, influential.

Thus, in this and other tractates the context can suggest alternatives such as 'influence' - qv. v. 9 in respect of the Alastoras, and tractate III:3 - or 'capability', qv. XI:3 and XII:20.

The word cræft also has the advantage of implying the plural, such as in the expression "the Cræft of theos."

comprehend. Considering the preceding σιώπησον the sense of ἀρθρόω here is not the literal 'articulate' the logos (by means of words spoken) but rather to be able to articulate it interiorly, clearly, and thus comprehend it for oneself.

arrivance. In respect of the unusual - but metaphysically appropriate - English word 'arrivance', cf. Luke 19:10, ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός, "the arrivance of the Son of Man was to seek and to save what was lost."

knowledge. γνῶσις. Cf. Poemandres 26, τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθὸν τέλος τοῖς γνῶσιν ἐσχηκόσι, and also γνῶσις ἁγία in v. 18 here, where the Greek might usefully be transliterated as gnosis.

knowledge of Delightfulness. Cf. v. 18: διὰ σοῦ τὸ νοητὸν φῶς ὑμνῶν χαίρω ἐν χαρᾷ νοῦ, through you, a song of apprehended phaos, delighted with delightful perceiverance.

9.

influxious. Derived from 'influxion' - one of which meanings is 'influence' - and denoting a powerful influence, as in the 17th century book *England's Teares For*

The Present Warres by James Howell, "the Moon hath an influxious power."

Grade. βαθμὸς. It is possible that this is a technical - esoteric - term which could also be translated as 'degree' indicative as the term seems to be of some mystical progression by a supplicant or initiate. However, the tractate does not provide any evidence as to what such a progression was from and to, or what the other grades might have been.

Ancestral Custom. δικαιοσύνη. The meaning is not 'righteousness', which imposes abstract theological meanings (mostly derived from the Old and New Testaments) on the text, but rather 'respectful of custom', of dutifully doing one's duty toward both the gods and other mortals. This Hellenic - this personal - meaning derives from understanding δίκη personified as the goddess of both Fairness *and of* Tradition (Ancestral Custom) with 'fairness' a more apt description of the word δίκη, given that terms such as justice and judgement have acquired, over millennia, abstract (and often legalistic) meanings which are not relevant to either the culture of ancient Hellas or to the Hellenic milieu of the Corpus Hermeticum. The Tradition, the ancestral custom, of ancient Hellas - with the attendant mythology and legends - was recounted by Hesiod in Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι (Works and Days) and in Θεογονία (Theogony).

Qv. δικαιοσύνη μου, τὸ δίκαιον ὕμνει δι΄ ἐμοῦ in v. 18.

vindicated. In respect of ἐδικαιώθημεν (qv. δικαιόω) what is not implied is 'made righteous' or 'made pure' - which are meanings derived from Christian exegesis, cf. ὁ δίκαιος δικαιοσύνην ποιησάτω ἔτι, Revelation 22:11 - but rather 'vindicated', justified, and in this case because Unfairness was *in absentia*, having fled with there thus being no need for any further deliberations.

community. κοινωνέω imputes the sense of 'sharing in common or in partnership', that is, a community of shared interests, which is the opposite of individual covetousness.

With that departed. Referring to the departure of Coveter, the personification here of covetousness.

Actualis. A borrowing from the Latin root to personify 'actuality', qv. the comment in v. 6 on Τί οὖν ἀληθές ἐστιν ὦ Τρισμέγιστε.

the noble has been returned. However τὸ ἀγαθὸν is interpreted - whether as the conventional 'the good', or as I interpret depending on context, 'the noble', 'the highest nobility', 'the honourable' - the literal meaning of πεπλήρωται here - denoting "τὸ ἀγαθὸν is completed", "τὸ ἀγαθὸν has been fulfilled", "τὸ ἀγαθὸν is full" - is somewhat obscure, especially if one compares it to an apposite context such as John 3:29,

> ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην νυμφίος ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου, ὁ ἑστηκὼς

καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ, χαρᾷ χαίρει διὰ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ νυμφίου. αὕτη οὖν ἡ χαρὰ ἡ ἐμὴ πεπλήρωται

He who has an espousess is the spouse, and the friend of the spouse - who stands by him and listens - is joyous with joy because of his words. Hence, my own joy is complete.

In tractate IV:4, πληρόω is also apposite,

Καὶ ποῦ αὐτὸν ἱδρύσατο.
Κρατῆρα μέγαν πληρώσας τούτου κατέπεμψε δοὺς κήρυκα καὶ ἐκέλευσεν αὐτῶι κηρύξαι ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καρδίαις τάδε...

Where, then, was it placed?
In that large repleteful chaldron which was dispatched down with an envoy assigned to declaim to the hearts of mortals...

Thus, I am inclined to consider that here the usage is metaphorical, suggestive of τὸ ἀγαθὸν having been completed (i) as in restored, returned to the person before the intervention of "the brutish Alastoras of Materies", who undermined, replaced, or who saught to replace τὸ ἀγαθὸν with such things as Grief, Unrestraint, Lascivity, and Putridity; or (ii) as in, as a gift from theos, completing - refining - the mortal by removing what was detrimental to τὸ ἀγαθὸν and thus to Palingenesis, with this completing - refining - returning them to the necessary state of being, as does the ἄνοδος described in the Poemandres tractate.

phaos. φάος. As with φῶς - qv. Poemandres, κ.τ.λ. - a transliteration since I am inclined to avoid the vague English word 'light' which word now implies many things which the Greek does not or may not; as for instance in the matter of over a thousand years of New Testament exegesis, especially in reference to the gospel of John. A transliteration requires the reader to pause and consider what phaos may, or may not, mean, suggest or imply, especially as φάος metaphorically (qv. Iliad, Odyssey, Hesiod, etcetera) implies the being, the life, 'the spark', of mortals, and, generally, either (i) the illumination, the light, that arises because of the Sun and distinguishes the day from the night, or (ii) any brightness that provides illumination and thus enables things to be seen. In addition, as noted in Poemandres 21 and perhaps relevant here,

φῶς καὶ ζωή ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ ἐγένετο ὁ Ἄνθρωπος

phaos and Life are the theos and the father from whence the human came into being

skotos. σκότος. Given the following τιμωρία and what has preceded, I have personified σκότος here (as Hesiod personified Darkness as Erebos) since it is implausible for 'darkness', understood as absence of light, to punish or seek vengeance.

they whirlingly rushed away. I incline toward the view that in respect of ἐκπέτομαι what is meant is not a literal 'flying away' but a metaphor for 'rushing away' or hastily fleeing. Similarly in respect of ῥοίζῳ which suggests a whirling about in confusion as they flee; cf. Poemandres 11, δινῶν ῥοίζῳ, spinning them around.

Thus concludes what is apparently the initiation into the secret mystery of Palingenesis which began in v. 6 with "thus it is, my son. It ascends, as Fire does, and descends, as Earth does..."

10.

the Dekad brought-into-being. τῆς δεκάδος παραγινομένης. Given that δεκάς is a metaphysical term of the Way of Palingenesis as that Way is explained in this tractate, I have used the transliteration Dekad rather than 'decad'.

geniture of apprehension. νοερὰ γένεσις. Literally, a birthing of apprehension, of the ability to apprehend beyond what the alastoras signify in respect of our mortal nature. As in tractates VI and XI, geniture expresses the contextual meaning of γένεσις here: that which or those whom have their genesis (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else. Here, this 'something else' is the Dekad which produces this particular birthing. In respect of geniture, XI:2 may provide some metaphysical context:

> Ἄκουε, ὦ τέκνον, ὡς ἔχει ὁ θεὸς καὶ τὸ πᾶν. θεός, ὁ αἰών, ὁ κόσμος, ὁ χρόνος, ἡ γένεσις. ὁ θεὸς αἰῶνα ποιεῖ, ὁ αἰὼν δὲ τὸν κόσμον, ὁ κόσμος δὲ χρόνον, ὁ χρόνος δὲ γένεσιν. τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ ὥσπερ οὐσία ἐστὶ [τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ καλόν, ἡ εὐδαιμονία,] ἡ σοφία· τοῦ δὲ αἰῶνος ἡ ταυτότης· τοῦ δὲ κόσμου ἡ τάξις· τοῦ δὲ χρόνου ἡ μεταβολή· τῆς δὲ γενέσεως ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ὁ θάνατος
>
> Hear then, my son, of theos and of everything: theos, Aion, Kronos, Kosmos, geniture. Theos brought Aion into being; Aion: Kosmos; Kosmos, Kronos; Kronos, geniture. It is as if the quidditas of theos is actuality, honour, the beautiful, good fortune, Sophia. Of Aion, identity; of Kosmos, arrangement; of Kronos, variation; of geniture, Life and Death.

banishing those twelve. The aforementioned alastoras, such as Grief and Lascivity.

by this geniture we are of theos. ἐθεώθημεν τῇ γενέσει. Cf. θεωθῆναι in Poemandres 26. As there, this does not mean or imply mortals become 'divinizied' or 'deified' - "made into gods" - but rather it means θέωσις in the Hellenic, hermetic, sense of being mystically (re)united with theos but still being mortal, human, because there is and cannot be any partaking of, any participation in, the essence, the quidditas - οὐσία - of theos, a sense well

expressed centuries later by Maximus of Constantinople:

> τῆς ἐπὶ τῷ θεωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μυστικῆς ἐνεργείας λήψεται πέρας κατὰ πάντα τρόπον χωρὶς μόνης δηλονότι τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος. Quæstiones ad Thalassium de Scriptura Sacra, XXII [Migne, Patrologiae Graeca, 90, c.0318]
>
> the end of the opus mysterium of human beings becoming of Theos can be in all ways except one, namely that of having the identity of His Essence

That is, Palingenesis means that mortals become *of* theos, not that they become theos or theoi. This may well explain the reading of the MSS, ἐθεωρήθημεν, amended by Nock (after Reitzenstein) to ἐθεώθημεν. For it is possible that the hermetic θέωσις implied, in practice, a contemplative type of life; a style of life hinted at in v. 2 - "noetic sapientia is in silence" - and in v. 7 when Hermes says to Thoth, "Go within: and an arriving. Intend: and an engendering. Let physical perceptibility rest, and divinity will be brought-into-being." Cf. Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ in v. 11.

that generosity. The definite article - *the* generosity - points to the meaning: not ἔλεος per se but rather the generosity of theos who gifts this geniture.

they consist of such. The MSS have συνιστάμενος - Nock, συνιστάμενον - and although some emendations have been proposed, including the addition of νοητῶν (ἐκ νοητῶν) and Reitzenstein suggesting a lacuna between γνωρίζει and ἐκ τούτων, what is referred to seems obvious: they consist of, are composed from, such things that are of - are derived from - theos.

11.

quietude engendered by theos. Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ. With ἀκλινής understood metaphorically, cf. σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ in v. 2.

the seeing is not of... In respect of φαντάζομαι, cf. XI:18, κεῖται γὰρ ἄλλως ἐν ἀσωμάτωι φαντασίαι.

through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. τῇ διὰ δυνάμεων νοητικῇ ἐνεργείᾳ. In respect of 'cræft', cf. ἀνακαθαιρό μενος ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεσιν in v. 8. In regard to noetic, qv. the comment on σοφία νοερὰ in v. 2. In respect of actuosity, qv. the comment on ἐνέργεια in v. 6.

The metaphysical content of this statement, important both in respect of what immediately follows - which bears comparison with XI:18-19 (see below) - and in respect of understanding Palingenesis, has been somewhat lost in previous translations such as "with the mental energy that comes through the powers" and "with the energy the Mind gives me through the powers."

What is meant is that there is a specific type of apprehension which is vivifying, which does not depend on what is seen directly by the eyes, and which is a cræft, a capability, an ability, an influencing, arising from the generosity of theos and from that quietude engendered by theos. Thoth then goes on to describe what this apprehension involves: ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...

I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water... Everywhere. ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...πανταχοῦ. Regarding this, and the aforementioned type of apprehension, cf. tractate XI:18-19,

> ἔνια δὲ τῶν λεγομένων ἰδίαν ἔννοιαν ἔχειν ὀφείλει· οἷον ὃ λέγω νόησον. πάντα ἐστὶν ἐν τῶι θεῶι. οὐχ ὡς ἐν τόπωι κείμενα (ὁ μὲν γὰρ τόπος καὶ σῶμά ἐστι, καὶ σῶμα ἀκίνητον, καὶ τὰ κείμενα κίνησιν οὐκ ἔχει)· κεῖται γὰρ ἄλλως ἐν ἀσωμάτωι φαντασίαι. νόησον τὸν περιέχοντα τὰ πάντα καὶ νόησον ὅτι τοῦ ἀσωμάτου οὐδέν ἐστι περιοριστικόν, οὐδὲ ταχύτερον, οὐδὲ δυνατώτερον· αὐτὸ δὲ πάντων καὶ ἀπεριόριστον καὶ ταχύτατον καὶ δυνατώτατον.
>
> καὶ οὕτω νόησον ἀπὸ σεαυτοῦ, καὶ κέλευσόν σου τῆι ψυχῆι εἰς Ἰνδικὴν πορευθῆναι, καὶ ταχύτερόν σου τῆς κελεύσεως ἐκεῖ ἔσται. μετελθεῖν δὲ αὐτῆι κέλευσον ἐπὶ τὸν ὠκεανόν, καὶ οὕτως ἐκεῖ πάλιν ταχέως ἔσται, οὐχ ὡς μεταβᾶσα ἀπὸ τόπου εἰς τόπον, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐκεῖ οὖσα. κέλευσον δὲ αὐτῆι καὶ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναπτῆναι, καὶ οὐδὲ πτερῶν δεηθήσεται. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ αὐτῆι οὐδὲν ἐμπόδιον, οὐ τοῦ ἡλίου πῦρ, οὐχ ὁ αἰθήρ, οὐχ ἡ δίνη, οὐχὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων σώματα· πάντα δὲ διατεμοῦσα ἀναπτήσεται μέχρι τοῦ ἐσχάτου σώματος. εἰ δὲ βουληθείης καὶ αὐτὸ ὅλον διαρρήξασθαι καὶ τὰ ἐκτός εἴ γέ τι ἐκτὸς τοῦ κόσμου θεάσασθαι, ἔξεστί σοι.
>
> Some of the matters spoken of require a certain apprehension, so consider what I say: everything is in the theos but not as if lying in a particular place - since the place is a body and also immovable and what is lain does not move - but an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise.
>
> Thus apprehend what embraces everything and apprehend that the incorporeal has no boundary, that nothing is swifter, nothing as mighty, since the incorporeal is boundless, the swiftest, the mightiest.
>
> And apprehend this about yourself and so urge your psyche to go to any land and, swifter than that urging, it will be there. Likewise, urge it to go to the Ocean and again it will be swiftly there without passing from place to place but as if already there.
>
> Urge it to go up into the heavens and it will be there without the need of any wings. Indeed, nothing will impede it: not the fire of the Sun nor Aether, nor the vortex, nor the bodies of the other stars, but - carving through them all - it will go as far as the furthest body. Should you desire to burst through The Entirety and observe what is

beyond - if indeed there be anything beyond that ordered system - then it is possible for you.

What is that Way? As in vv. 7 and 10, an alternative here for τρόπος would be Art.

12.

dwelling. σκῆνος. The Greek word has been variously interpreted, as 'shelter', 'tent', and, in the New Testament, has been understood metaphorically to mean 'tabernacle' in reference to the body (2 Corinthians 5.1, 5.4). Here, what seems to be suggested, as Hermes later explains, is the deathful body as a temporary dwelling place for what is deathless.

passed beyond. διεξέρχομαι. Passed beyond as in the previous "I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water..." and as in the "go beyond yourself as those who sleepfully dream" of v. 4.

zodiac. ζῳοφόρος. Literally, τοῦ ζῳοφόρου κύκλου implies "the life-bearing circle", referring to the personifications of the zodiacal constellations with the heavens understood as an abode of various divinities, qv. *Hymn to King Helios Dedicated to Sallust*, Πολὺ δὲ πρὸς οἷς ἔφην πλῆθός ἐστι περὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν θεῶν, οὓς κατενόησαν οἱ τὸν οὐρανὸν μὴ παρέργως μηδὲ ὥσπερ τὰ βοσκήματα θεωροῦντες. τοὺς τρεῖς γὰρ τετραχῇ τέμνων διὰ τῆς τοῦ ζῳοφόρου κύκλου πρὸς ἕκαστον αὐτῶν κοινωνίας τοῦτον αὖθις τὸν ζῳοφόρον εἰς δώδεκα θεῶν δυνάμεις διαιρεῖ καὶ μέντοι τούτων ἕκαστον εἰς τρεῖς, ὥστε ποιεῖν ἓξ ἐπὶ τοῖς τριάκοντα. (IV, 148c).

Cf. *De Mundo*, ὧν μέσος ὁ ζωιοφόρος καλούμενος κύκλος ἐγκάρσιος διὰ τῶν τροπικῶν διέζωσται. (Bekker, Aristoteles Opera Omnia, I, 392a)

composed of beings, twelve in number. Omitting the redundant ἀριθμῶν.

same physis. φύσεως μιᾶς. As in other tractates I have transliterated φύσις since in the Hermetica physis is a metaphysical principle or attribute whose meaning goes beyond, but can include, what the English terms 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denote, as the Poemandres tractate makes clear and where physis is, several times, personified, as for example in v. 14,

> ἅμα δὲ τῆι βουλῆι ἐγένετο ἐνέργεια καὶ ὤικησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν

> Then, his want and his vigour realized, and he within that image devoid of logos, Physis grasped he whom she loved to entwine herself around him so that, as lovers,

> they were intimately joined together.

polymorphous. παντόμορφος. Cf. XI:16, ἐπεὶ οὖν ὁ κόσμος παντόμορφος γέγονεν.

difference. διαζυγή. Literally, division, separation, cf. Euripides, Troades, 669 - ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ πῶλος ἥτις ἂν διαζυγῇ τῆς συντραφείσης - and διάζευξις (disunion).

effector of psyche. ψυχογόνος. The 16th century English word *effector* (from the Latin word used by Cicero) is someone or some-thing who or which engenders or produces some-thing. As in other tractates, I have transliterated ψυχή as 'psyche' so as not to impose a particular meaning on the text. Whether what is meant is *anima mundi* - or some-thing else, such as the 'soul' of a human being, or a personification - is a question of contextual interpretation. However interpreted, it is an important, a primal, principle in this and other hermetic tractates, and might imply here the original, ancient Greek, sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; of that 'thing' (or being) which (or who) animates beings making them 'alive'.

with Life and Phaos a unity there where the arithmos of the henad is brought forth from the pneuma. ζωὴ δὲ καὶ φῶς ἡνωμέναι εἰσίν ἔνθα ὁ τῆς ἑνάδος ἀριθμὸς πέφυκε τοῦ πνεύματος. Since this expression is important to understanding the metaphysics described in the tractate it deserves some attention.

i) In respect of Life and Phaos, qv. v. 9.

ii) I have transliterated ἀριθμός here since the context suggests it implies more than the English word 'number' understood as a particular abstraction representing the quantity of 'things'; qv. Aristotle, ἄλλος δέ τις τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τὸν τῶν εἰδῶν ἕνα εἶναι, ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον εἶνα (Metaphysics, Book XIII, 1080b.20). Given such a distinction - and the discussion regarding ἀριθμός and Pythagoras in Book XIII, 1083b.10 et seq, and given the occurrence of ἀριθμός with μονάς in tractate IV,

> μονὰς οὖσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἑτέρου ἀριθμοῦ...
>
> Just as the Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos without itself being enfolded by any, begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any...

ἀριθμός is suggestive of a metaphysical (and/or of an esoteric, hermetic) principle or attribute - such as being an effluvium, or an emanation, of theos/monas/The One - whose outward (esoteric) appearance or representation is often assumed to be a particular 'numerical' quantity. As to whether or not what is suggested in the tractate regarding ἀριθμός is indicative of the metaphysics of Pythagoras, or represents a similar but different mystical

tradition, is an interesting question.

In terms of mystical tradition, there is a subtle difference between effluvia and emanations, with emanation often understood in the sense of some-thing proceeding from, or having, a source; as for example in theological use where the source is considered to be theos or some aspect of a divinity or God. Effluvium, however, has (so far as I am aware) no theological connotations and accurately describes a particular perceiveration: a flowing of what-is, sans the assumption of a primal cause, and sans a division or a distinction between 'us' – we mortals – and some-thing else, be this some-thing else theos, God, a divinity, the numinous, or some assumed, ideated, cause, essence, origin, or form. Effluvia presence, manifest - or can presence and manifest in sentient beings such as ourselves, via for example a Way such as Palingenesis - the divine, the numinous.

iii) I have translated ἑνάς as 'henad' - avoiding the prosaic translation 'unit' - given the metaphysical context, the aforementioned comparison with IV:10, the equivalance of ἑνάς and μονάς, and also the following, from tractate XII:15,

> ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις συνθέτοις πᾶσι σώμασιν ἀριθμὸς ἑκάστου ἐστί. χωρὶς γὰρ ἀριθμοῦ σύστασιν ἢ σύνθεσιν ἢ διάλυσιν ἀδύνατον γενέσθαι· αἱ δὲ ἑνάδες τὸν ἀριθμὸν γεννῶσι καὶ αὔξουσι καὶ πάλιν διαλυόμενον εἰς ἑαυτὰς δέχονται, καὶ ἡ ὕλη μία.
>
> Yet in other combined corpora there is for each of them an arithmos, for without arithmos it is not possible for such a bringing together, such a melding, such a dissolution, to come-into-being. Henads beget and grow arithmos and, on its dissolution, receive it into themselves.

iv) As in other tractates, I have transliterated πνεῦμα (as pneuma) since, as with ψυχή - κ.τ.λ. - it is suggestive here of a particular metaphysical (and/or of an esoteric, hermetic) attribute, requiring contextual interpretation consistent with what is currently understood of Greco-Roman mysticism and metaphysics. The usual translation of 'spirit' can impose Christian, modern philosophical and other contemporary, meanings on the text.

13.

All That Exists. τὸ πᾶν. Literally, 'the all', but metaphysically implying 'all that exists', that is, the Universe, the Kosmos. Qv. the Cantio Arcana (Esoteric Song) of vv. 17-18, and also XII:22-23 where the term is synonymous with theos.

> τοῦτό ἐστιν ὁ θεός, τὸ πᾶν. ἐν δὲ τῶι παντὶ οὐδέν ἐστιν ὃ μὴ ἔστιν ὁ θεός· ὅθεν οὔτε μέγεθος οὔτε τόπος οὔτε ποιότης οὔτε σχῆμα οὔτε χρόνος περὶ τὸν θεόν ἐστι· πᾶν γάρ ἐστι, τὸ δὲ πᾶν διὰ πάντων καὶ περὶ πάντα.
>
> this is theos, All That Exists. For in all that exists there is no-thing that he is not.

> Therefore, neither size, nor location nor disposition, nor appearance, nor age, are about theos. For he is all that exists; encompassing everything and within everything

When the context merits it, and to avoid awkward phraseology, I have sometimes translated τὸ πᾶν as Kosmos, as at vv. 18 and 19.

the perceiveration. τῷ νοΐ. Which perceiveration was mentioned in v. 11: "the seeing is not of the sight from the eyes but that through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air..."

In effect, this perceiveration is of theos, and thus (i) of perceiving that 'all that exists' - including ourselves - are emanations of theos, or (ii) of perceiving that 'all that exists', including ourselves, are effluvia and thus presence, manifest - or can presence and manifest, via for example the Way of Palingenesis - the divine, the numinous, with theos thus understood as the artisan who crafted ourselves and every-thing else:

> Ἐπειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός, οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγωι, ὥστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου, τῆι δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα (Tractate IV:1)
>
> Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos you should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, as One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

Which metaphysical understanding is not only rather lost in conventional translations of ἐμαυτὸν ἐν τῷ νοΐ such as "I see myself in Mind," but which also introduce an abstraction, an ἰδέα, 'the mind', which detracts from an appreciation of emanations of theos and effluvia of the numinous.

No more to present the body in three separations. τὸ μηκέτι φαντά ζεσθαι εἰς τὸ σῶμα τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν. Or, less literally, "no more to present the body in three separate ways." And 'no more' because the perceiveration is of 'all that exists' as either emanations of theos (the One) or presencings of the divine, the monadic numinous.

i) *to present*. That is, to present - to show - in a particular manner. In respect of φαντάζεσθαι, cf. Aeschylus, Agamemnon,

> μηδ᾽ ἐπιλεχθῇς
> Ἀγαμεμνονίαν εἶναί μ᾽ ἄλοχον.
> φανταζόμενος δὲ γυναικὶ νεκροῦ
> τοῦδ᾽ ὁ παλαιὸς δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ
> Ἀτρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατῆρος
> τόνδ᾽ ἀπέτεισεν

τέλεον νεαροῖς ἐπιθύσας.

> But do not add to those words that it was me who was the mistress of Agamemnon
> Since the wife of this corpse presents herself here
> As that most ancient fierce Avenger.
> It is Atreus, he of that cruel feast,
> Who, in payment for that, has added to his young victims
> This adult one.

ii) *separations*. As noted in my commentary on tractate IV:1, what is not meant by διαστατός is 'dimension', given what the term 'dimension' now imputes scientifically and otherwise. What is expressed in IV:1 may also be relevant here:

> τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἄλλωι τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον· οὔτε γὰρ πῦρ ἐστιν οὔτε ὕδωρ οὔτε ἀὴρ οὔτε πνεῦμα, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.
>
> That Being has no body that can be touched or seen or measured or which is separable or which is similar to any other body: not of Fire or Water or of Pneuma even though all such things are from that Being.

Thus, to translate τὸ μηκέτι φαντά ζεσθαι εἰς τὸ σῶμα τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν as something like "no longer to picture the three-dimensional body" is to introduce two fairly recent, and unnecessary, abstractions: that of to picture/visualize - as if in some-thing denoted by the term 'mind' - and that of 'three-dimensions'. Whereas what the Greek expresses is relatively simple and suitable to the milieu of Greco-Roman mysticism: of not seeing, of not representing, the body in three particular ways. What these three separate ways are is open to interpretation, but the context suggests in terms of physicality, of psyche, and of pneuma.

through this disclosure. Although 'disclosure' seems apposite, λόγος could be translated here - as in the title - as 'discourse'.

Between τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν and διὰ τὸν λόγον, Nock et al indicate a lacuna, although it is possible to make some sense of what is here rather obscure Greek. [An overview of some of the problems here - in the context of the meaning of the following διάβολος - is given by Anna Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès: Pratiques rituelles et traités hermétiques*, Brill (Leiden), 2012, pp.100-4]

written about for you alone. Reading ὅν εἰς σὲ μόνον ὑπεμνηματισάμην with Reitzenstein et al, and taking ὑπεμνηματισάμην to refer to 'writing about' Palingenesis.

rouner. διάβολος. In regard to the Old English word *rouner* - denoting a person who whispers secrets or who spreads rumours in a secretive, disruptive,

manner - qv. the Prologue of the 14th century *Cloud Of Unknowing*,

> Fleschely janglers, opyn preisers and blamers of hemself or of any other, tithing tellers, rouners and tutilers of tales

Also, cf. 2 Timothy 3:3, ἄστοργοι, ἄσπονδοι, διάβολοι, ἀκρατεῖς (unloving, unforgiving, rouners, unrestrained) where mention is made of ἀκρατής, which in this tractate is personified as one of the Alastoras.

I take the following τοῦ παντὸς as referring to keeping the silence - the secrets - as mentioned in v. 22, rather than as referring to the preceding τὸ πᾶν.

the many. τοὺς πολλούς. It is possible to take this pejoratively and thus as referring to 'plebal outsiders', to 'the masses', the plebeians.

but instead to whomsoever theos himself desires. Reading ἀλλ᾽ εἰς οὓς ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸς θέλει with Reitzenstein. The text is obscure to the point of being corrupt, with various emendations having been proposed, and thus my translation is somewhat conjectural.

14.

Speak quietly. Qv. v. 8

constituted of such crælts. Such crælts as Palingenesis, and thus such abilities as a crælt confers.

disrespected. ἀσεβεῖσθαι. Qv. Lysias, Funeral Oration, 2.7,

> Ἀθηναῖοι ἡγησάμενοι ἐκείνους μέν εἴ τι ἠδίκουν, ἀποθανόντας δίκην ἔχειν τὴν μεγίστην τοὺς δὲ κάτω τὰ αὐτῶν οὐ κομίζεσθαι ἱερῶν δὲ μιαινομένων τοὺς ἄνω θεοὺς ἀσεβεῖσθαι
>
> the Athenians considered that if those ones had done harm then their death was the greater punishment, with those in the realms below not being attended to, and - with their consecrated places defiled - the gods above were being disrespected

Also, cf. Poemandres 23,

> τοῖς δὲ ἀνοήτοις καὶ κακοῖς καὶ πονηροῖς καὶ φθονεροῖς καὶ πλεονέκταις καὶ φονεῦσι καὶ ἀσεβέσι πόρρωθέν εἰμι
>
> I keep myself distant from the unreasonable, the rotten, the malicious, the jealous, the greedy, the bloodthirsty, the hubriatic

the quiddity of geniture. τῆς οὐσιωδοῦς γενέσεως. A metaphysical expression

which, in context, signifies that the essentiality, the realness, of the particular bringing-into-being that is Palingenesis - with its perception of effluvia (or of emanations of theos) and of the mortal being 'all that exists' - is far removed from the physis that ordinary perception associates with the physical body.

engendered of theos. θεὸς πέφυκας. That is, reborn through Palingenesis because of theos. The following καὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς παῖς provides the necessary context. In respect of Palingenesis signifying becoming *of* theos (as a child is *of* the parent) and not becoming theos or theoi, qv. the comment on v. 6, "by this geniture we are of theos." Cf. φύσει μεν πέφυκας θεός (Josephus Hymnographicus, *Feast of Saint Basilissa*, Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 105, 1120) and δόξης γέμων θεός πέφυκας (Joannes Geometra, *Carmina Varia*, Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 106, 997)

15.

song. ὕμνος. Not a 'hymn' in the Christian sense (which the word hymn now so often imputes) but rather celebrating the numinous, and theos, in song, verse (ode), and chant.

you said you heard from those influences when you reached the Ogdoad. The Ogdoad - ὄγδοος, the eighth - relates to Poemandres 26, τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν, the ogdoadic physis which is beyond the seven spheres, the reaching of which is celebrated in song, ὑμνεῖ σὺν τοῖς οὖσι τὸν πατέρα, which signifies the end of the mortal anados (ἄνοδος) and where the mortal hears 'the influences' - those of The Cræft - who or which are beyond the ogdoad celebrating theos in melodious song, τινων δυνάμεων ὑπὲρ τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν φωνῆι τινι ἡδείαι ὑμνουσῶν τὸν θεόν.

There are several ways of interpreting the text here and what follows. If one accepts the emendation σου (Nock, after Reitzenstein) then Thoth is asking to hear the song Hermes heard when he reached the Ogdoad, while if one reads, with the MSS, μου, then Thoth is asking for the song Hermes said Thoth would hear when Thoth himself reaches the Ogdoad. In addition, τῶν δυνάμεων in association with either σου ἀκοῦσαι or μου ἀκοῦσαι is awkward, implying "heard from The Cræft" - or, in exoteric terms, "from the (those) Powers/Forces /Influences/" - when whomsoever reaches the Ogdoad, and which inclines one to ask, whose or what influences/powers? Those mentioned, for example, in vv. 8-9, such as Delightfulness, Self-Restraint, and Perseverance? If so, are these influences, collectively, The Cræft itself personified and who thus, through the generosity of theos, enable Palingenesis?

On balance, given the reference to Poemandres 26, I am inclined to accept the emendation σου and take 'the influences' as referring to those of The Cræft, some of whom are personified in vv. 8-9, and which 'influences' are those who in Poemandres 26 are "celebrating theos in melodious song."

divined about the Ogdoad. Taking καθὼς Ὀγδοάδα ὁ Ποιμάνδρης ἐθέσπισε with τέκνον, not with the preceding ἀκοῦσαι τῶν δυνάμεων.

Poemandres, the perceiveration of authority. Qv. Poemandres 2, εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς. As there, the title implies "What (knowledge) I reveal (or am about to reveal) is authentic," so that an alternative translation, in keeping with the hermeticism of the text, would be "I am Pœmandres, the authentic perceiveration."

and entrusting me to presence the beautiful. καὶ ἐπέτρεψέ μοι ἐκεῖνος ποιεῖν τὰ καλά. While an alternative translation is "and entrusting me to presence the noble," it does not immediately connect to what follows: of beautifully presencing such beautiful things as the esoteric song (υμνωδία κρύπτη, cantio arcana) which Hermes proceeds to teach to Thoth.

16.

except to you at your completion. εἰ μὴ σοὶ ἐπὶ τέλει τοῦ παντός. More literally, "except to you at the ending of the whole." That is, at the ending of the initiation into the secret of Palingenesis.

respectfully. That is, reverentially. The sense of προσκυνέω here does not necessarily imply a 'kneeling down' or some sort of what the Greeks (and the Romans) would undoubtedly have described as a 'barbarian adoration' or prostration as if in worship of Helios or of some-thing. It also does not necessarily imply a type of body-bent bowing, a stooping, toward a particular person (cf. Herodotus, I:119.1, ἅρπαγος μὲν ὡς ἤκουσε ταῦτα, προσκυνήσας καὶ μεγάλα ποιησάμενος ὅτι τε ἡ ἁμαρτὰς οἱ ἐς δέον ἐγεγόνεε καὶ ὅτι ἐπὶ τύχῃσι χρηστῇσι ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἐκέκλητο, ἤιε ἐς τὰ οἰκία).

What such respect, in this particular case, involved is unknown although the tractate - with its invokations of Self-Restraint, the imperturbable, the unwaveringly noble, of a contemplative silence, and its declamation of "go within" - is suggestive of a simple, unadorned, silent, respect for the numinous and the divine, as might perhaps be manifest in a slight bowing of the head. Cf. John 4:20 where the type of reverence is also unknown,

> οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ προσεκύνησαν· καὶ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἰεροσολύμοις ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ὅπου προσκυνεῖν δεῖ.
>
> Our ancestors gave reverence on this mountain but you say that the necessary place of reverence is in Jerusalem.

17.

Logos Δ. The MSS at this point have the heading υμνωδία κρύπτη, λόγος Δ. While υμνωδία κρύπτη is understandable - Esoteric Song, Cantio Arcana, Secret Chant - the meaning of λόγος Δ is conjectural, with suggestions including The Fourth Song, The Fourth Formula, and the Fourth Discourse, with the obvious implication that there are, or were, four such hermetic songs, formulae, or discourses, with various suggestions as to those other three, such as Poemandres 31, tractate V:10, and Asclepius 41, all of which are relatively short.

every Physis of Kosmos. Among the presencings of the Kosmos described here by their physis are Earth, Trees, the Heavens, Air, and Water.

In respect of Kosmos and physis, qv. tractate XII:14,

> ἀνάγκη δὲ καὶ ἡ πρόνοια καὶ ἡ φύσις ὄργανά ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου
>
> Necessitas, forseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos

Gaia. γῆ. Earth as elemental principle, hence the personification here since Earth is being directly, personally, invoked.

open. ἀνοίγνυμι. Cf. Papyri Graecae Magicae, XXXVI. 312ff. The term was often used in both mystic odes and in classical magicae incantations. The Latin *aperio* well expresses the sense, as in "aperire librum et septem signacula eius," (Jerome, Revelation V:5) and "et cum aperuisset sigillum secundum." (Jerome, Revelation VI:3)

μοχλός. Here, not a literal 'bolt' or 'lock' but what prevents (access to) or is a defence against something.

Abyss. ἀβύσσου. This is the emendation of Reitzenstein for the various readings of the MSS. Nock has ὄμβρου which does not make sense here, for why "open what prevents" rain? In respect of ἄβυσσος, qv. tractate III:1.

incurvate. This unusual English term is appropriate here to poetically suggest the sense of the Greek - σείω - which is to bend from side to side as if shaken by an earthquake, by a trembling of the Earth.

Master Artisan. κτίσεως κύριον. 'Founding Lord', or less poetically, Lord of Creation. Theos as creator-artisan is mentioned in Poemandres 9, with the term there, and in tractate IV:1, being δημιουργόν. Qv. also δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών (the craft of theos: Aion) in tractate XI:3.

clan. κύκλος. Here signifying a particular group, or a particular assembly, of people as in the English expression "the inner circle." Hence, "the clan of

theos".

Sweet water. γλυκὺ ὕδωρ. The sweetness of water suitable to drink. Cf. John 4:10, ὕδωρ ζῶν, the 'living water' - that is, the water of life, ὕδωρ ζωῆς.

bring light to. In respect of φαίνω as 'bringing light', cf. Plato, Timaeus, 39b,

> φῶς ὁ θεὸς ἀνῆψεν ἐν τῇ πρὸς γῆν δευτέρᾳ τῶν περιόδων, ὃ δὴ νῦν κεκλήκαμεν ἥλιον, ἵνα ὅτι μάλιστα εἰς ἅπαντα φαίνοι τὸν οὐρανὸν
>
> theos ignited a light in that second circle from Earth, named now as Helios, so that it could bring light to all of the heavens

fond celebration. Regarding εὐλογία in a neutral way which does not impute the Christian sense of "praise the Lord", qv. Poemandres 22,

> παραγίνομαι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ὁ Νοῦς τοῖς ὁσίοις καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς καὶ ἐλεήμοσι, τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσι, καὶ ἡ παρουσία μου γίνεται βοήθεια, καὶ εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσιν εὐλογοῦντες καὶ ὑμνοῦντες τεταγμένως πρὸς αὐτὸν τῇ στοργῇ
>
> I, perceiveration, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

my Arts. As at Poemandres 31 - which is also a traditional doxology (δοξολογία) to theos - the sense of δυνάμεων is not 'powers', forces (or something similar and equally at variance with such a laudation) but 'arts'; that is, particular abilities, qualities, and skills. Here, these abilities and skills - the craft - relate to esoteric song; to be able to be an effective laudator in respect of theos and "every Physis of Kosmos."

18.

numinous. ἅγιος. As in the Poemandres tractate and other tractates.

knowledge. As at Poemandres 26, γνῶσις here could be transliterated as gnosis although I incline toward the view that such a transliteration might - given what the term gnosis now imputes, as for example in being a distinct 'spiritual way' - lead to incorrectly imposing modern meanings on the text.

numinal understanding. φωτίζω here implies an understanding given by a divinity, as for example in spiritual enlightenment, something that is not conveyed if a single word such as 'enlightened' is used as a translation. In order to express something of the Greek, I had used the term 'numinal understanding' with numinal implying 'divine' as at tractate III:1,

Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῖον καὶ φύσις θεία

The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis.

phaos. As at Poemandres 4ff - and in other tractates - a transliteration of φῶς - using the the Homeric φάος, given that it (like physis) is a fundamental principle of Hermetic weltanschauungen and one which the overused English word 'light', with all its modern and Christian interpretations, does not satisfactorily express.

mastery. Implying mastery over one's self, cf. Chaucer, The Physician's Tale: "Bacus hadde of hir mouth right no maistrie." (v. 58)

respectful of custom. δίκαιος. Not 'righteous', which imposes abstract theological meanings (mostly derived from the Old and New Testaments) on the text, but rather 'respectful of custom', of dutifully doing one's duty (that is, being honourable) toward both the gods and other mortals.

Honesty. ἀλήθεια. Given that those who are urged to sing are personifications, this is not some abstract, disputable, 'truth' but as often elsewhere in classical literature, a revealing, a dis-covering, of what is real as opposed to what is apparent or outer appearance. In personal terms, being honest and truthful.

Through me, may Kosmos accept... δι΄ ἐμοῦ δέξαι τὸ πᾶν λόγῳ. I take this with the following λογικὴν θυσίαν, and τὸ πᾶν as vocative, and poetically combine the unnecessary λόγῳ with λογικὴν. As punctuated by Nock et al it would with λογικὴν θυσίαν literally be something such as "through me accept in speech All That Exists/the Kosmos, an offering spoken," which - in the context of the song and of theos being τὸ πᾶν, All That Exists/the Kosmos - is distinctly odd.

Here, as in v. 19, translating τὸ πᾶν as Kosmos, rather than 'All That Exists' to elucidate the meaning and avoid awkward phraseology.

respectful wordful offerings. Qv. Poemandres 31. The difficult to translate Greek term λογικὴν θυσίαν implies an offering, and one which is both respectful and conveyed by means of words but which words are of themselves insufficient, inadequate, with the term 'wordful' suggesting such insufficiency as well as doubling for λόγῳ in the previous line.

19.

I take λογικὴν θυσίαν (respectful wordful offerings) as the end of the named, the metaphysical, 'esoteric song' (υμνωδία κρύπτη) with what follows - lines 214-235, that is, until the interjection by Thoth - a personal evokation, a chant, to theos - τὸ πᾶν - for acceptance of the offering (the singing of the esoteric

song) followed by a personal request to remain enlightened, followed by an epiphonema which includes sentiments of personal gratitude.

Life, recure. σῷζε ζωή. Recure - from the classical Latin recuro - is an interesting, if neglected, English word and is apposite here implying as it does restore (to health), heal, and preserve. As mentioned in Poemandres 17 regarding Life and Phaos,

> ὁ δὲ Ἄνθρωπος ἐκ ζωῆς καὶ φωτὸς ἐγένετο εἰς ψυχὴν καὶ νοῦν, ἐκ μὲν ζωῆς ψυχήν, ἐκ δὲ φωτὸς νοῦν
>
> Of Life and Phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from Phaos - perceiveration

Theos, spiritus. πνεῦμα θεέ. In respect of πνεῦμα Nock considered it doubtful and noted the suggestion of Keil, πνευμάτιζε, although πνεῦμα θεέ - theos, pneuma (spiritus) - does seem appropriate: theos, 'a breath', a breathing, Pneuma; which breathing imbues beings with life and spirit, with pnuema.

Breath-Giver, Artisan. πνευματοφόρε δημιουργέ. Literally, "Pnuema-Bearing, Artisan." The Master Craftsman whose craft is to make - to construct, to create - living beings.

20.

Because of your desire. Qv. v. 4, θελήματι θεοῦ.

21.

I follow Festugiere and take τῷ σῷ τὴν εὐλογίαν ταύτην λεγομένην as belonging to Thoth, not Hermes.

a more numinal perceiveration. Regarding ἐπιφωτιζω, qv. v. 16, γνῶσις ἁγία, φωτισθεὶς ἀπὸ σοῦ and the comment on 'numinal understanding'. As there, what is meant is not some ordinary type of 'illumination' but rather a divinely-inspired or a divinely-given understanding. Here, this understanding has enhanced the perceiveration Thoth has acquired.

from my heart. As at v. 4, φρήν as a metaphor for the heart. Which explains the response of Hermes: μὴ ἀσκόπως.

essentiator. Qv. v. 4.

kyrios. A transliteration of the Greek, appropriate here given what terms such as 'Lord' and 'Master' now so often denote, and given Poemandres 6,

Οὕτω γνῶθι· τὸ ἐν σοὶ βλέπον καὶ ἀκοῦον, λόγος κυρίου, ὁ δὲ νοῦς πατὴρ θεός. οὐ γὰρ διίστανται ἀπ' ἀλλήλων· ἕνωσις γὰρ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ ζωή

Then know that within you - who hears and sees - is logos kyrios, although perceiveration is theos the father. They are not separated, one from the other, because their union is Life.

22.

invokation. εὔχομαι. Not 'pray' - which has too many Christian and other non-Hellenic religious connotations - but invokation, as in appeal to a deity, to call upon, to offer a laudation or an offering. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 933, ηὔξω θεοῖς δείσας ἂν ὧδ᾽ ἔρδειν τάδε, did you invoke the gods because you feared doing such things?

the unrottable produce. τὰ ἀθάνατα γενήματα. Literally, "the deathless/immortal produce". Taking ἀθάνατος metaphorically contrasts well with the preceding 'bearing good fruit'.

the tradition. In respect of παράδοσις, cf. παραδιδόναι μοι in v. 1. As there, the suggestion is of a disclosing of some ancestral teaching or wisdom; the disclosing by a teacher or master to a pupil.

rouners. For 'rouner' in respect of διάβολος, qv. v. 13, εἰς ὃν ὑπεμνηματι σάμην ἵνα μὴ ὦμεν διάβολοι τοῦ παντὸς εἰς τοὺς πολλούς.

noesis. A technical, mystical, term, qv. the comment on 'noetic sapientia' in v. 2.

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ΕΡΜΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΙΣΜΕΓ.

πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν Τὰτ ἐν ὄρει λόγος ἀπόκρυφος
περὶ παλιγγενεσίας, καὶ σιγῆς ἐπαγγελίας.

ΕΝ τοῖς γνωικοῖς ὦ πάτερ, αἰνιγματωδῶς, καὶ οὐ τηλαυγῶς ἔφρασας περὶ θεότητος ὀφθαλμόμυος· καὶ ὃν ἀπεκάλυψας, φάρμυος μηδένα δυνάσθαι σοφιῶσαι περὶ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας, ἐμοῦ τέ σου ἱκέτου γνομένου ὑπὲ τῆς τοῦ ὄρους μεταβάσεως, μὴ δόσει ἐμοὶ ἀφαλεχθῶσαι, καὶ πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν, ὅπη τοῦτον

A Note On The Term Noesis In Tractate XIII

Context

In many ways the last line of section 22 of tractate XIII of the Corpus Hermeticum - νοερῶς ἔγνως σεαυτὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἡμέτερον - expresses an important aspect of the Hellenistic hermetic tradition: that "through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father" which relates to section 2 of the tractate where the expression σοφία νοερὰ occurs.

However, this aspect has been somewhat neglected since νοερός has usually been and still is translated by English words which now imply and have implied for well over a century philosophical and latterly psychological denotata, abstractions, categories, which I consider are not relevant to the Hellenistic milieu.

In his 1882 translation Chambers used the word 'mind', "Mentally thou hast known thyself and The Father that is ours," [1] while the 1992 translation by Copenhaver was "You know yourself and our father intellectually." [2]

A neglected aspect, because and for instance 'intellectually' now implies 'cleverly', 'by means of certain types of abstractive reasoning or concepts or ideas' with an 'intellectual' perceived as a certain type of person.

My own translation, in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, [3] is "Through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father," using noesis, a transliteration, to suggest a hermetic, a metaphysical, principle which requires contextual interpretation since as I noted in my commentary, the terms νοῦς νοερός, νοῦς οὐσιώδης, and νοῦς ζωτικός are mentioned by Proclus, [4] with νοῦς there and in the Corpus Hermeticum not suggestive of the denotata 'mind', which now has also acquired philosophical and latterly psychological meanings, but of 'perceiveration' as in the Poemandres tractate:

> φημὶ ἐγώ, Σὺ γὰρ τίς εἶ; – Ἐγὼ μέν, φησίν, εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς· οἶδα ὃ βούλει, καὶ σύνειμί σοι πανταχοῦ.
>
> φημὶ ἐγώ, Μαθεῖν θέλω τὰ ὄντα καὶ νοῆσαι τὴν τούτων φύσιν καὶ γνῶναι τὸν θεόν· πῶς, ἔφην, ἀκοῦσαι βούλομαι. – φησὶν ἐμοὶ πάλιν, Ἔχε νῶι σῶι ὅσα θέλεις μαθεῖν, κἀγώ σε διδάξω.
>
> I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority, knowing your desires and eachwhere with you.
>
> I answered that I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings, and to have knowledge of theos. That is what I want to hear. [5]

In summation, noesis is a personal method, a praxis, by which particular knowledge, a particular understanding, can be obtained and in the context of tractate XIII this is of Palingenesis, παλιγγενεσία, acquired "in silence" and which emanation, of theos, "is not taught; rather, it is presenced by and when the theos desires," οὐ διδάσκεται, ἀλλ´ ὅταν θέλῃ, ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναμιμνήσκεται. [v.2]

As the student describes in v.11:

> With a quietude, father, engendered by theos, the seeing is not of the sight from the eyes but that through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air. I am in living beings, in plants; in the womb, before the womb, after the womb. Everywhere. [6]
>
> Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὦ πάτερ, φαν τάζομαι, οὐχ ὁράσει ὀφθαλμῶν ἀλλὰ τῇ διὰ δυνάμεων νοη τικῇ ἐνεργείᾳ. ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι· ἐν ζῴοις εἰμί, ἐν φυτοῖς· ἐν γαστρί, πρὸ γαστρός, μετὰ γασ τέρα, πανταχοῦ.

In regard to the word Cræft in the translation, this older spelling in an esoteric context implies (as often in this tractate) a particular *Arte*, the application of particular abilities, skills, and knowledge, especially abilities, skills, and knowledge learned or received in the traditional manner from a master of the Arte or Arts in question. In this esoteric sense, theos is the Master Craftsman, with Palingenesis being a Cræft, an Arte that "is not taught; rather, it is presenced by and when the theos desires". The word cræft also has the advantage of implying the plural, such as in the expression the Cræft(s) of theos.

As for Palingenesis, from the Latin palingenesia, English terms such as 'rebirth' or 'regeneration' do not describe what is meant in terms of the context of the Corpus Hermeeticum which is that mortals become *of* theos, not that they become theos or theoi. This may well explain the reading of the MSS in v.10, ἐθεωρήθημεν, amended by Nock (after Reitzenstein) to ἐθεώθημεν. For it is possible that the hermetic θέωσις implied, in practice, a contemplative type of life; a style of life hinted at in v. 2 - "noetic sapientia is in silence" - and in v. 7 when Hermes says to Thoth, "Go within: and an arriving. Intend: and an engendering. Let physical perceptibility rest, and divinity will be brought-into-being." Cf. Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ in v. 11.

Hence Palingenesis is not a Buddhist-type of rebirth or of being reborn to eternally live in some place such as Heaven, but an awareness that we are "in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air [...] in living beings, in plants; in the womb, before the womb, after the womb. Everywhere" and thus that our perception of ourselves as an individual different and distinct from others, human and otherwise, is but an illusion, preventing us understanding theos, our relation to theos, and thus our place in the Cosmos.

Which explains v.7, of the need to "refine yourself, away from the brutish Alastoras of Materies,"

> "My son, one Vengeress is Unknowing; the second, Grief. The third, Unrestraint; the fourth, Lascivity. The fifth, Unfairness; the sixth, Coveter. The seventh, Deceit; the eighth, Envy. The ninth, Treachery; the tenth, Wroth. The eleventh, Temerity; the twelfth, Putridity. In number, these are twelve but below them are numerous others who, my son, compel the inner mortal - bodily incarcerated - to suffer because of perceptibility. But they absent themselves - although not all at once - from those to whom theos is generous, which is what the Way and Logos of Palingenesis consists of." [7]
>
> Μία αὕτη, ὦ τέκνον, τιμωρία ἡ ἄγνοια· δευτέρα λύπη· τρίτη ἀκρασία· τετάρτη ἐπιθυμία· πέμπτη ἀδικία· ἕκτη πλεονεξία· ἑβδόμη ἀπάτη· ὀγδόη φθόνος· ἐνάτη δόλος· δεκάτη ὀργή· ἑνδεκάτη προπέτεια· δωδεκάτη κακία· εἰσὶ δὲ αὗται τὸν ἀριθμὸν δώδεκα· ὑπὸ δὲ ταύτας πλείονες ἄλλαι, ὦ τέκνον, διὰ τοῦ δεσμωτηρίου τοῦ σώματος αἰσθητικῶς πάσχειν ἀναγκάζουσι τὸν ἐνδιάθετον ἄνθρω πον· ἀφίστανται δὲ αὗται, οὐκ ἀθρόως, ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐλεηθέν τος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ οὕτω συνίσταται ὁ τῆς παλιγγενε σίας τρόπος καὶ λόγος.

This is similar to the ἄνοδος, the hermetic quest, of the Peomandres tractate, v.25, of the journey of the mortal through the seven spheres:

> καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾷ λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τετάρτῃ τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῇ πέμπτῃ τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῇ ἕκτῃ τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ ζώνῃ τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.
>
> "Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait." [7]

Theos, The Monas, Divinity, The One, And Patriarchy

The expression "through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father" - νοερῶς ἔγνως σεαυτὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἡμέτερον - is, in my view comparable to the phrase "quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora" of Marsilii Ficini from 1489 CE [8] which itself is a restatement of an expression from the Arabic text Lawh al-Zumurrud in *Sirr al-khalīqa* dating from several centuries earlier which I translated as "for the higher is as the lower with the lower as the higher." [9]

Both express important aspects of the esoteric nature of ancient hermeticism whose essence is perhaps expressed by

this section from Lawh al-Zumurrud:

> The signs were from The One
> As all beings are from The One
> Through one design:
> The father, the Sun,
> The mother, the Moon,
> The Pnuema, the womb
> The Earth, the nourishment. [9]

As described in tractate XI, v.11:

> It is evident someone is so creating and that he is One; for Psyche is one, Life is one, Substance is one. But who is it? Who could it be if not One, the theos? To whom if not to theos alone would it belong to presence life in living beings? Theos therefore is One...
>
> καὶ ὅτι μὲν ἔστι τις ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα δῆλον· ὅτι δὲ καὶ εἷς, φανερώτατον· καὶ γὰρ μία ψυχὴ καὶ μία ζωὴ καὶ μία ὕλη. τίς δὲ οὗτος; τίς δὲ ἂν ἄλλος εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός; τίνι γὰρ ἄλλωι ἂν καὶ πρέποι ζῶια ἔμψυχα ποιεῖν εἰ μὴ μόνωι τῶι θεῶι; εἷς οὖν θεός.

The One is almost certainly the μονάς, Monas, of tractate IV for in vv.10-11 of that tractate it is stated:

> This is the distinction between what is akin and what is different
> With what is different having a privation of what is akin.
> Since the Monas is the origin and foundation of everything
> It is within everything as origin and foundation
> For if there is no origin there is nothing
> And the origin is not from anything but itself
> Since it is the origin of everything else,
> Just as the Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos [10]
> Without itself being enfolded by any,
> Begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any.
>
> Everything that is begotten is unfinished, partible,
> Liable to decline, resurgence
> Which do not befall what is complete
> For what is resurgent is resurgence from Monas
> But what is brought low is so by its own malady
> Because unable to hold Monas.
>
> This, then, Thoth, is the eikon of the theos
> Insofar as it can be drawn:
> If you - clearly, carefully - and with the eyes of your heart apprehend it
> Then I assure you, my son, that you shall find the path to what is above:
> In truth, the eikon will guide you
> Since the seeing of it is uniquely your own,
> For those who attain such a beholding are attentively held, pulled up,
> Just as it is said lodestone does with iron.
>
> αὕτη διαφορὰ τοῦ ὁμοίου πρὸς τὸ ἀνόμοιον, καὶ τῶι ἀνομοίωι ὑστέρημα πρὸς τὸ ὅμοιον. ἡ γὰρ μονάς, οὖσα πάντων ἀρχὴ καὶ ῥίζα, ἐν πᾶσίν ἐστιν ὡς ἂν ῥίζα καὶ ἀρχή. ἄνευ δὲ ἀρχῆς οὐδὲν, ἀρχὴ δὲ ἐξ οὐδενὸς ἀλλ' ἐξ αὐτῆς, εἴ γε ἀρχή ἐστι τῶν ἑτέρων. μονὰς οὖσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἑτέρου ἀριθμοῦ.
>
> πᾶν δὲ τὸ γεννώμενον ἀτελὲς καὶ διαιρετόν, καὶ αὐξητὸν καὶ μειωτόν, τῶι δὲ τελείωι οὐδὲν τούτων γίνεται. καὶ τὸ μὲν αὐξητὸν αὐξάνεται ἀπὸ τῆς μονάδος, ἁλίσκεται δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀσθενείας, μηκέτι δυνάμενον τὴν μονάδα χωρῆσαι. αὕτη οὖν, ὦ Τάτ. κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν σοι ὑπογέγραπται τοῦ θεοῦ εἰκών· ἣν ἀκριβῶς εἰ θεάσηι καὶ νοήσεις τοῖς τῆς καρδίας ὀφθαλμοῖς, πίστευσόν μοι, τέκνον, εὑρήσεις τὴν πρὸς τὰ ἄνω ὁδόν. μᾶλλον δὲ αὐτή σε ἡ εἰκὼν ὁδηγήσει. ἔχει γάρ τι ἴδιον ἡ θέα· τοὺς φθάσαντας θεάσασθαι κατέχει καὶ ἀνέλκει, καθάπερ φασὶν ἡ μαγνῆτις λίθος τὸν σίδηρον.

Similarly, the Poemandres tractate states that "phaos and Life formed the father of all beings," [11] with the logical conclusion that the appellations Monas, The One, The Father, Theos, (θεὸς) and The Theos (ὁ θεὸς) are equivalent.

As for the Father, an appelation famiiar from Christianity, the Poemandres tractate, v.9, is quite explicit:

> Theos, the perceiveration, male-and-female [ἀρρενόθηλυς] being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiveration, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate.
>
> ὁ δὲ Νοῦς ὁ θεός, ἀρρενόθηλυς ὤν, ζωὴ καὶ φῶς ὑπάρχων, ἀπεκύησε λόγωι ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν, ὃς θεὸς τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ πνεύματος ὤν, ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτά, ἐν κύκλοις περιέχοντας τὸν

αἰσθητὸν κόσμον, καὶ ἡ διοίκησις αὐτῶν εἱμαρμένη καλεῖται.

This male-and-female theos therefore does not seem to be the patriarchal male God of the Old and New Testaments which has led to disputations regarding the meaning of ἀρρενόθηλυς, with for instance Copenhaver opting for 'androgyne', Chambers translating 'masculine-feminine' and Nock 'mâle-et-femelle', [12] with the common suggestion that it is an epithet for the unity of apparent opposites, metaphysically in a blending of two different philosophical ancient traditions one of which was Stoicism, the other deriving from Plato [13] and, as I am inclined to favour, alchemically as described and as illustrated in texts such as *De Alchimia Opuscula Complura Veterum Philosophorum* first published in 1550 CE.

ἀρρενόθηλυς

Another alternative is 'hermaphrodite' based on the myth of the child of the gods Hermes and Aphrodite, Hermaphroditus who was often associated with matters of a carnal kind, as for example in the myth of the nymph Salmacis.

Whatever the suggestions, there is as far as I know no corollary with the male god of patriarchal traditions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, for Poemandres goes on to explain in v.14:

> When she beheld such unceasing beauty - he who possessed all the vigour of the viziers and was the image of theos - she lovingly smiled, for it was as if in that Water she had seen the semblance of that mortal's beautiful image and, on Earth, his shadow. And as he himself beheld in that Water her image, so similar to his own, he desired her and wanted to be with her. Then, his want and his vigour realized, and he within that image devoid of logos, Physis grasped he whom she loved to entwine herself around him so that, as lovers, they were intimately joined together. [14]
>
> ὃν ἰδοῦσα ἀκόρεστον κάλλος πᾶσαν ἐνέργειαν ἐν ἑαυτῶι ἔχοντα τῶν διοικητόρων τήν τε μορφὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐμειδίασεν ἔρωτι, ὡς ἅτε τῆς καλλίστης μορφῆς τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου τὸ εἶδος ἐν τῶι ὕδατι ἰδοῦσα καὶ τὸ σκίασμα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. ὁ δὲ ἰδὼν τὴν ὁμοίαν αὐτῶι μορφὴν ἐν αὐτῆι οὖσαν ἐν τῶι ὕδατι, ἐφίλησε καὶ ἠβουλήθη αὐτοῦ οἰκεῖν· ἅμα δὲ τῆι βουλῆι ἐγένετο ἐνέργεια, καὶ ὥικησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν· ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν· ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν.

The personified Physis (φύσις) gives birth to "seven male-and-female mortals" (v.16) who become the seven viziers who surround the perceptible cosmic order in seven spheres. (v. 9)

Hence why I incline toward the view that Theos, (θεὸς) and The Theos (ὁ θεὸς) and The Father of several of the tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum are not equivalent to the God of the Christian tradition and that to render ὁ θεὸς and θεὸς of such tractates by the term God is a mistake. Hence my somewhat iconoclastic view that the hermeticism of the eight tractates I have translated and commented on [3] are not only far more redolent of Greco-Roman pagan mysticism than they are of early Christianity but also that they, contrary to the modern majority view, may well have influenced early Christianity.

Thus noesis, a personal method, a praxis, by which particular knowledge, a particular understanding, can be obtained, is of and presences that Greco-Roman pagan mysticism and the alchemical tradition that derived from it and which tradition was so well expressed in Lawh al-Zumurrud. [9]

David Myatt
March 2024 CE

[1] John Chambers, *Hermes Trismegistus*, T&T Clark, 1882.

[2] Brian Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, Cambridge University Press, 1992

[3] David Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, 2017. (i) Printed edition: ISBN 978-1976452369 (ii) Gratis pdf: https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

The Appendix below contains the relevant extract from my *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*.

[4] *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentari*, Volume 5, Book 4, 245-247; *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, II 733 and IV 887.

[5]

perceiveration. νοῦς. The conventional interpretation here is 'mind', as if in contrast to 'the body' and/or as if some fixed philosophical and abstract principle is meant or implied.

This conventional interpretation is in my view incorrect, being another example of not only retrospective reinterpretation but of using a word which has acquired, over the past thousand years or more, certain meanings which detract from an understanding of the original text. Retrospective reinterpretation because the assumption is that what is being described is an axiomatic, reasoned, philosophy centred on ideations such as Thought, Mind, and Logos, rather than what it is: an attempt to describe, in fallible words, a personal intuition about our existence, our human nature, and which intuition is said to emanate from a supernatural being named Pœmandres.

In addition, one should ask what does a translation such as 'I am Poimandres, mind of sovereignty' [*vide* Copenhaver] actually mean? That there is a disembodied 'mind' which calls itself Pœmandres? That this disembodied 'mind' is also some gargantuan supernatural shapeshifting being possessed of the faculty of human speech? That some-thing called 'sovereignty' has a mind?

I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.

Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action. Hence why, in the Oedipus Tyrannus, Sophocles has Creon voice his understanding of the incipient hubris of Oedipus, of his pride without a purpose, of his apparent inability to understand, to correctly perceive, the situation:

> εἴ τοι νομίζεις κτῆμα τὴν αὐθαδίαν
> εἶναί τι τοῦ νοῦ χωρίς, οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονεῖς.
>
> If you believe that what is valuable is pride, by itself,
> Without a purpose, then your judgement is not right.
>
> vv. 549-550

Translating νοῦς as perceiverance/perceiveration thus places it into the correct context, given αὐθεντίας - authority. For "I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority" implies "What [knowledge] I reveal (or am about to reveal) is authentic," so that an alternative translation, in keeping with the hermeticism of the text, would be "I am Pœmandres, the authentic perceiveration." [The English word authentic means 'of authority, authoritative' and is derived, via Latin, from the Greek *αὐθεντία*]

eachwhere. An unusual but expressive (c.15th century) English word, suited to such an esoteric text. The meaning here is that, like a guardian δαίμων of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is always close by: eachwhere with you.

[6]

quietude engendered by theos. Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ. With ἀκλινής understood metaphorically, cf. σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ in v. 2.

the seeing is not of... In respect of φαντάζομαι, cf. XI:18, κεῖται γὰρ ἄλλως ἐν ἀσωμάτωι φαντασίαι.

through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. τῇ διὰ δυνάμεων νοητικῇ ἐνεργείᾳ. In respect of 'cræft', cf. ἀνακαθαιρόμενος ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεσιν in v. 8. In regard to noetic, qv. the comment on σοφία νοερὰ in v. 2. In respect of actuosity, qv. the comment on ἐνέργεια in v. 6.

The metaphysical content of this statement, important both in respect of what immediately follows - which bears comparison with XI:18-19 (see below) - and in respect of understanding Palingenesis, has been somewhat lost in previous translations such as "with the mental energy that comes through the powers" and "with the energy the Mind gives me through the powers."

What is meant is that there is a specific type of apprehension which is vivifying, which does not depend on what is seen directly by the eyes, and which is a cræft, a capability, an ability, an influencing, arising from the generosity of theos and from that quietude engendered by theos. Thoth then goes on to describe what this apprehension involves: ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...

I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water... Everywhere. ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...πανταχοῦ. Regarding this, and the aforementioned type of apprehension, cf. tractate XI:18-19,

> ἕνια δὲ τῶν λεγομένων ἰδίαν ἔννοιαν ἔχειν ὀφείλει· οἷον ὃ λέγω νόησον. πάντα ἐστὶν ἐν τῶι θεῶι. οὐχ ὡς ἐν τόπωι κείμενα (ὁ μὲν γὰρ τόπος καὶ σῶμά ἐστι, καὶ σῶμα ἀκίνητον, καὶ τὰ κείμενα κίνησιν οὐκ ἔχει)· κεῖται γὰρ ἄλλως ἐν ἀσωμάτωι φαντασίαι. νόησον τὸν περιέχοντα τὰ πάντα καὶ νόησον ὅτι τοῦ ἀσωμάτου οὐδέν ἐστι περιοριστικόν, οὐδὲ ταχύτερον, οὐδὲ δυνατώτερον· αὐτὸ δὲ πάντων καὶ ἀπεριόριστον καὶ ταχύτατον καὶ δυνατώτατον.
>
> καὶ οὕτω νόησον ἀπὸ σεαυτοῦ, καὶ κέλευσόν σου τῆι ψυχῆι εἰς Ἰνδικὴν πορευθῆναι, καὶ ταχύτερόν σου τῆς κελεύσεως ἐκεῖ ἔσται. μετελθεῖν δὲ αὐτῆι κέλευσον ἐπὶ τὸν ὠκεανόν, καὶ οὕτως ἐκεῖ πάλιν ταχέως ἔσται, οὐχ ὡς μεταβᾶσα ἀπὸ τόπου εἰς τόπον, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐκεῖ οὖσα. κέλευσον δὲ αὐτῆι καὶ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναπτῆναι, καὶ οὐδὲ πτερῶν δεηθήσεται. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ αὐτῆι οὐδὲν ἐμπόδιον, οὐ τοῦ ἡλίου πῦρ, οὐχ ὁ αἰθήρ, οὐχ ἡ δίνη, οὐχὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων σώματα· πάντα δὲ διατεμοῦσα ἀναπτήσεται μέχρι τοῦ ἐσχάτου σώματος. εἰ δὲ βουληθείης καὶ αὐτὸ ὅλον διαρρήξασθαι καὶ τὰ ἐκτός εἴ γέ τι ἐκτὸς τοῦ κόσμου θεάσασθαι, ἔξεστί σοι.
>
> Some of the matters spoken of require a certain apprehension, so consider what I say: everything is in the theos but not as if lying in a particular place - since the place is a body and also immovable and what is lain does not move - but an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise.
>
> Thus apprehend what embraces everything and apprehend that the incorporeal has no boundary, that nothing is swifter, nothing as mighty, since the incorporeal is boundless, the swiftest, the mightiest.
>
> And apprehend this about yourself and so urge your psyche to go to any land and, swifter than that urging, it will be there. Likewise, urge it to go to the Ocean and again it will be swiftly there without passing from place to place but as if already there.
>
> Urge it to go up into the heavens and it will be there without the need of any wings. Indeed, nothing will impede it: not the fire of the Sun nor Aether, nor the vortex, nor the bodies of the other stars, but - carving through them all - it will go as far as the furthest body. Should you desire to burst through The Entirety and observe what is beyond - if indeed there be anything beyond that ordered system - then it is possible for you.

[7]

brutish. Given the metaphysical context, and the contrast with καθαρός, ἄλογος implies more than 'irrational' or 'unreasonable'. The sense is of the unrefined, the uncultured, the brutish.

alastoras. Since the Greek word τιμωρία is specific and personal, implying vengeance, retribution, and also a divine punishment, it seems apposite to try and keep, in English, the personal sense even though no specific deeds or deeds are mentioned in the text, but especially because of what follows: Τιμωροὺς γὰρ ἐν ἐμαυτῷ ἔχω, ὦ πάτερ. Hence my interpretation, "the brutish alastoras of Materies," using the English term alastoras - singular, *alastor*, from the Greek ἀλάστωρ, an avenging deity, and also a person who avenges certain deeds. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 1497-1508.

materies. ὕλη. A variant form of the Latin *materia*, thus avoiding the English word 'matter' which now has connotations, derived from sciences such as Physics, that are not or may not be relevant here. In addition, the term requires contextual, metaphysical, interpretation, for as used here it may or may not be equivalent to the ὕλη of Poemandres 10, of III:1, και τα λοιπά. Hence why I have here chosen 'materies' rather than - as in those other tractates - 'substance'.

[8] *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, Book III, Chapter XXVI.

[9] Myatt, *Lawh al-Zumurrud*, 2024, https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2024/02/dwm-lawh-al-zumurrud.pdf

[10] In regard to "enfolds every arithmos [...] begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any".

This passage, with its mention of ἀριθμός, is often assumed to refer to the Pythagorean doctrine regarding numbers since ἀριθμός is invariably translated as 'number' - thus implying what the English word implies, especially in mathematical terms - even though Aristotle, in discussing ἀριθμός, wrote: ἄλλος δέ τις τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τὸν τῶν εἰδῶν ἕνα εἶναι, ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον εἶνα (Metaphysics, Book XIII, 1080b.20).

Given such a necessary distinction - and the discussion regarding ἀριθμός and Pythagoras in Book XIII, 1083b.10 et seq - as well as the fact that what ἀριθμός means here, in this tractate, and what it implies - such as the mathematical numbers 2 and 3 developing from the One - is not mentioned, I have transliterated ἀριθμός thus leaving open what it may or may not mean in relation to the particular weltanschauung being described. However, the context seems to suggest a metaphysical rather than an abstract mathematical notion, especially given what follows at the beginning of section 11: πᾶν δὲ τὸ γεννώμενον ἀτελὲς καὶ διαιρετόν.

[11]

> Yet why, according to the logos of theos, does the one of self-discovery progress within themselves?
>
> To which I replied, phaos and Life formed the father of all beings, from whence that human came into being.
>
> You express yourself well. For phaos and Life are the theos and the father from whence the human came into being. Therefore if you learn to be of Life and phaos - and that you perchance are of them - then you progress to return to Life. Thus spoke Pœmandres.
>
> Can you - who are my perceiveration - therefore tell me how I may progress to Life? For does not theos say that the human of perceiveration should have self-knowledge?
>
> κατὰ τί δὲ «ὁ νοήσας ἑαυτὸν εἰς αὐτὸν χωρεῖ», ὅπερ ἔχει ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος; – φημὶ ἐγώ, Ὅτι ἐκ φωτὸς καὶ ζωῆς συνέστηκεν ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, ἐξ οὗ γέγονεν ὁ Ἄνθρωπος. – Εὖ φὴις λαλῶν· φῶς καὶ ζωή ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ ἐγένετο ὁ Ἄνθρωπος. ἐὰν οὖν μάθηις αὐτὸν ἐκ ζωῆς καὶ φωτὸς ὄντα καὶ ὅτι ἐκ τούτων τυγχάνεις, εἰς ζωὴν πάλιν χωρήσεις. ταῦτα ὁ Ποιμάνδρης εἶπεν – Ἀλλ' ἔτι μοι εἰπέ, πῶς εἰς ζωὴν χωρήσω ἐγώ, ἔφην, ὦ Νοῦς ἐμός; φησὶ γὰρ ὁ θεός· «ὁ ἔννους ἄνθρωπος ἀναγνωρισάτω ἑαυτόν».

[12] A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Third Edition, 1972

[13] The problem here with such metaphysical explanations is that they assume there were specific supra-personal traditions or schools of thought distinctive enough to be taught and transmitted and later described by a term such as Stoicism, just as it has been assumed the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum represented a hermetic tradition whereas I am inclined toward the view that many if not most of the tractates present the personal weltanschauung of their authors germane to their time. That is, that rather than being representative of some axiomatical pre-existing philosophy or of some school of thought, they reproduce the insight and the understanding of individuals regarding particular metaphysical matters; an insight and an understanding no doubt somewhat redolent of, and possibly influenced by, and sometimes perhaps paraphrasing, some such existing philosophies and/or some such schools of thought; and an insight which often differs from tractate to tractate.

[14]

Physis grasped [...] intimately joined together. ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν. The sense of μίγνυμι here is that of a physical union, a sexual joining together - not of some 'philosophical mingling' of 'forms'. Similarly, περιπλέκω is not some ordinary 'embrace' but a sexual twinning (of limbs). Cf. Hesiod, Theogony, 375 - Κρίῳ δ᾽ Εὐρυβίν τέκεν ἐν φιλότητι μιγεῖσα Ἀστραῖόν.

Appendix

Section 22 Of Tractate XIII

Text

Εὐχαριστῶ σοι, πάτερ, ταῦτά μοι αἰνεῖν εὐξαμένῳ.

Χαίρω, τέκνον, καρποφορήσαντος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας τὰ ἀγαθά, τὰ ἀθάνατα γενήματα. τοῦτο μαθὼν παρ´ ἐμοῦ τῆς ἀρετῆς σιγὴν ἐπάγγειλαι, μηδενί, τέκνον, ἐκφαί νων τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τὴν παράδοσιν, ἵνα μὴ ὡς διάβολοι λογισθῶμεν. ἱκανῶς γὰρ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἐπεμελήθη, ἐγώ τε ὁ λέγων, σύ τε ὁ ἀκούων. οερῶς ἔγνως σεαυτὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἡμέτερον.

Translation

My thanks to you, father, for your advice regarding the invokation.

My son, I am glad that the actuality has borne good fruit, the unrottable produce. Having learned of this from me, profess silence my son about this wonder, revealing to no one the tradition of the Palingenesis, for otherwise we will be regarded as rouners. Each of us has had a sufficiency of interest: I in speaking, you in listening. Through noesis you

have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father.

Commentary

invokation. εὔχομαι. Not 'pray' - which has too many Christian and other non-Hellenic religious connotations - but invokation, as in appeal to a deity, to call upon, to offer a laudation or an offering. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 933, ηὔξω θεοῖς δείσας ἂν ὧδ᾽ ἔρδειν τάδε, did you invoke the gods because you feared doing such things?

the unrottable produce. τὰ ἀθάνατα γενήματα. Literally, "the deathless/immortal produce". Taking ἀθάνατος metaphorically contrasts well
with the preceding 'bearing good fruit'. the tradition. In respect of παράδοσις, cf. παραδιδόναι μοι in v. 1. As there, the suggestion is of a disclosing of some ancestral teaching or wisdom; the disclosing by a teacher or master to a pupil.

rouners. For 'rouner' in respect of διάβολος, qv. v. 13, εἰς ὃν ὑπεμνηματι σάμην ἵνα μὴ ὦμεν διάβολοι τοῦ παντὸς εἰς τοὺς πολλούς.

> <quote>
>
> *rouner.* διάβολος. In regard to the Old English word *rouner* - denoting a person who whispers secrets or who spreads rumours in a secretive, disruptive, manner - qv. the Prologue of the 14th century *Cloud Of Unknowing*: Fleschely janglers, opyn preisers and blamers of hemself or of any other, tithing tellers, rouners and tutilers of tales.
>
> Also, cf. 2 Timothy 3:3, ἄστοργοι, ἄσπονδοι, διάβολοι, ἀκρατεῖς (unloving, unforgiving, rouners, unrestrained) where mention is made of ἀκρατής, which in this tractate is personified as one of the Alastoras.
>
> I take the following τοῦ παντὸς as referring to keeping the silence - the secrets - as mentioned in v. 22, rather than as referring to the preceding τὸ πᾶν.
>
> </quote>

noesis. A technical, mystical, term, qv. the comment on 'noetic sapientia' in v. 2:

> <quote>
>
> *noetic sapientia*. For a variety of reasons, I have used the term *noetic sapientia* to denote σοφία νοερὰ.
>
> i) The metaphysical terms νοῦς νοερός, νοῦς οὐσιώδης, and νοῦς ζωτικός occur in Proclus, qv. *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentari*, Volume 5, Book 4, 245-247; *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, II 733 and IV 887. Interestingly, Proclus associates νοερός with the three 'septenary planets' Mercury, Venus, and the Sun.
>
> Here, σοφία νοερὰ may well suggest a particular hermetic principle which requires contextual interpretation.
>
> ii) As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 29 - where I used the Latin *sapientia* in respect of σοφία - in some contexts the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context given what the English term 'wisdom' now, in common usage and otherwise, often denotes. As in the Poemandres tractate *sapientia* (for σοφία) requires contextual - a philosophical - interpretation, as Sophia (for σοφία) does in tractate XI where it is there suggestive, as with Aion, Kronos, and Kosmos, of a personified metaphysical principle.
>
> iii) In respect of νοερός, the English word 'intellectual' has too many irrelevant modern connotations, with phrases such as 'intellectual wisdom' and 'the wisdom that understands' - for σοφία νοερὰ - unhelpful regarding suggesting a relevant philosophical meaning. Hence the use of the term 'noetic' which suggests a particular type of apprehension - a perceiveration - whereby certain knowledge and a particular understanding can be ascertained.
>
> Thus, *noetic sapientia* implies that the knowledge and understanding that is noetically acquired transcends - or at least is different from - that acquired both (a) through observation of and deductions concerning phenomena and (b) through the use of denotatum whereby beings are given 'names' and assigned to abstractive categories with such naming and such categories assumed to provide knowledge and understanding of the physis of those beings. [In respect of physis, qv. the comment on φύσεως μιᾶς in section 12.]
>
> In addition, given what follows - ἐν σιγῇ, 'in silence' - such knowledge and understanding does not require nor depend upon words whether they be spoken or written or thought. Hence, the 'source' of mortals is in, can be known and understood through, the silence of noetic sapientia.
>
> </quote>

All translations by DW Myatt

Image credit:
The beginning of tractate XIII from the book Mercvrii Trismegisti Pœmandres, published in Paris in 1554

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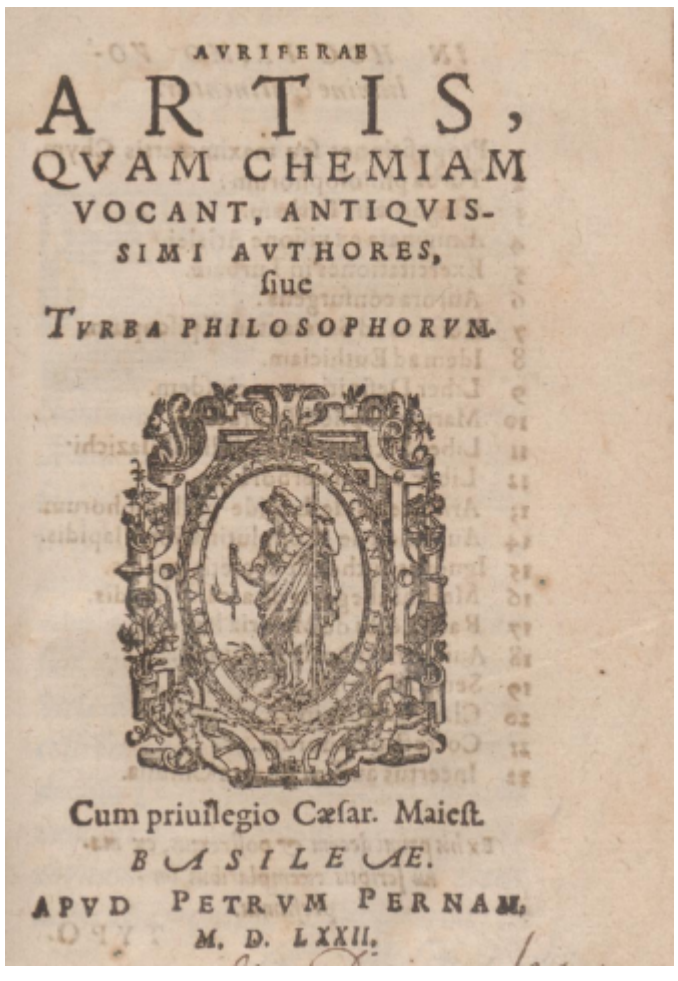
Anaximander, Imbalance, And Opposites

Three quotations attributed to the Greek philosopher Anaximander (c. 610 – c. 546 BCE) one quotation in Greek and two in Latin, have been much debated over the centuries with all three suggesting an ancient weltanschauung which resonated with later weltanschauungen such as hermeticism and alchemy, which is possibly why the two Latin quotations were included in a 1572 CE compendium on alchemy in the section titled *Turba Philosophorum* itself a Latin translation of an earlier Arabic text by Muḥammad ibn Umayl al-Tamimi (c.900–960 CE).


AVRIFERAE
ARTIS,
QVAM CHEMIAM
VOCANT, ANTIQVIS-
SIMI AVTHORES,
siue
TVRBA PHILOSOPHORVM.
Cum priuilegio Cæsar. Maiest.
BASILEAE.
APVD PETRVM PERNAM.
M. D. LXXII.

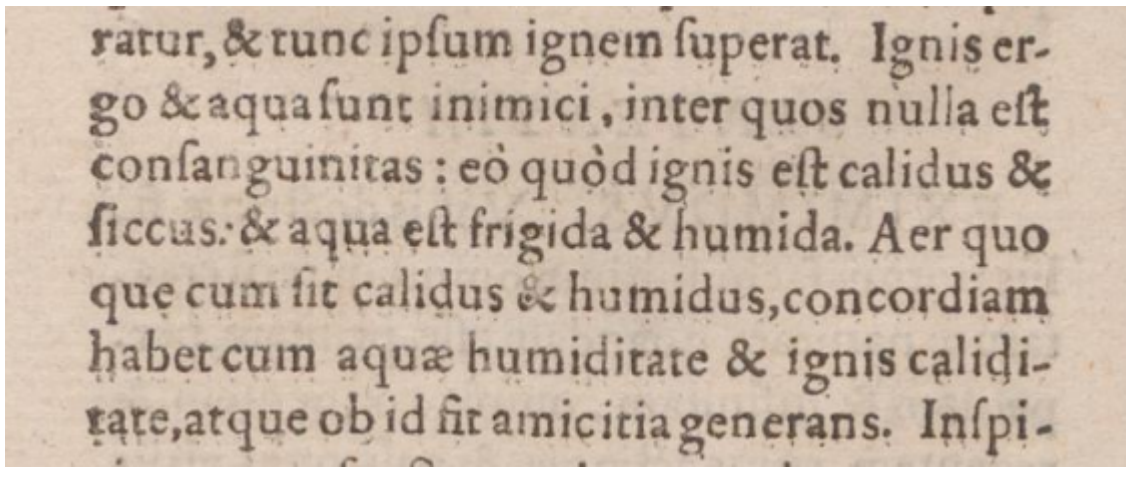
My methodology in interpreting these quotations derives from my understanding that certain Latin and Greek words as originally used by their authors represent philosophical, or hermetic or alchemical, principles or substances or what we now term 'archetypes', and that it is therefore erroneous to translate them by English words which over centuries may and often have acquired ordinary meanings, such as air', 'water', 'fire'.

The question of such principles is, as Aristotle wrote in his Metaphysics, (3.996a) an interesting and complex question answered by many in certain ways with others proposing as first principles Fire, Water, and Air - ἄλλος δέ τις πῦρ ὁ δὲ ὕδωρ ἢ ἀέρα - which leads him to the question of whether or not such principles are universal or individual.

The Latin Texts

The Latin of the first quotation in Turba Philosophorum is:

> ignis ergo et aqua sunt inimici, inter quos nulla est consanguinitas, eo quod ignis est calidus et siccus, aqua vero frigida et humida


ratur, & tunc ipſum ignem ſuperat. Ignis er-
go & aqua ſunt inimici, inter quos nulla eſt
conſanguinitas: eò quòd ignis eſt calidus &
ſiccus: & aqua eſt frigida & humida. Aer quo
que cum ſit calidus & humidus, concordiam
habet cum aquæ humiditate & ignis calidi-
tate, atque ob id fit amicitia generans. Inſpi-

Auriferae artis, quam chemiam vocant, antiquissimi authores, sive turba philosophorum
Basileae, 1572

My interpretation of meaning:

> Ignis [1] and Acua [2] are not friendly for there are no ties of kindred among them: Ignis is fiery and resolute while Acua is cool and moistening. [3]

1. Retaining the Latin rather than simply translating here as 'fire' because Ignis (πυρὸς) is a philosophical, hermetic and alchemical, principle (or substance or archetype) as in the Corpus Hermeticum. For example:

> σὺ εἶ ὁ θεός. ὁ σὸς ἄνθρωπος ταῦτα βοᾷ διὰ πυρός, δι΄ ἀέρος, διὰ γῆς, διὰ ὕδατος, διὰ πνεύματος, διὰ τῶν κτισμάτων σου
>
> You are theos. Your mortal loudly calls out: through Ignis [Fire, πυρός], through Air, through Earth, through Water, through Pneuma, through your created beings.
>
> > Logos Δ. The Esoteric Song, Tractate XIII, 20. Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum*, 2017. ISBN 9781976452369

Compare also a fragment attributed to Heraclitus:

> ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα συνεστάναι εἰς τοῦτο ἀναλύεσθαι πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα καὶ πάντα ψυχῶν εἶναι καὶ δαιμόνων πλήρη [Diogenes Laertius, 11:7]
>
> The foundation/base/essence of all beings ['things'] is pyros to which they return, with all [of them] by genesis appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] to be bound together again by enantiodromia, and all filed/suffused/vivified with/by ψυχή and Dæmons.

2. Acua. I have opted for a somewhat obscure regional (Sardinian) variant of aqua rather than simply retaining the Latin or translating as 'water' because aqua is now a somewhat commercialized word with the Greek ὕδωρ, like Pyros, a hermetic and alchemical principle, qv. Corpus Hermeticum, Tractate IV, 1:

> τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἄλλωι τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον· οὔτε γὰρ πῦρ ἐστιν οὔτε ὕδωρ οὔτε ἀὴρ οὔτε πνεῦμα, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. ἀγαθὸς γὰρ ὢν, μόνωι ἑαυτῶι τοῦτο ἀναθεῖναι ἠθέλησε καὶ τὴν γῆν κοσμῆσαι,
>
> That Being has no body that can be touched or seen or measured or which is separable or which is similar to any other body: not of Fire [pyros] or Water [ὕδωρ] or of Pneuma even though all such things are from that Being. (Myatt, op.cit.)

3. (i) qv. "moistness and consistency" in the second quotation, below. (ii) cf. William Caxton: "one somer is softe and moyste, and another is drye and wyndy." Myrrour of the Worlde, 1481 CE.

°°°

The Latin of the second quotation in Turba Philosophorum is:

> doceo autem vos stellas esse igneas et aera ipsas continere et quod si aeris humiditas et spissitudo non esset, quae solis flammam separaret a creaturis, omnia subsistentia sol combureret.

The Arabic of Muḥammad ibn Umayl al-Tamimi (c.900–960 CE) from *Kitab al-ma 'al-waraqi* containing the quotation is:

قال أكسميدوس الجرعاني [. . .] فالماء والنار عدوان ليست
بينهما قرابة واشجة لأن النار حارّة يابسة والماء بارد رطب
فأمّا الهواء فحارّ رطب فأصلح ما بينهما برطوبته مع حرارته
فصار الهواء مصلحا بين الماء والنار. والأرواح كلهم من لطيف
بخار الهواء تكون لأنه إذا اجتمعت السخونة مع الرطوبة فليس
لهما بد من أن يخرج من بينهما لطيف يصير بخارا أو ريحا لأن
حرارة الشمس تُخرج

My interpretation of meaning:

> I inform you that stars are Igneous, that Aeros [1] bounds them, and it is the moistness and consistency [2] of Aeros which keeps the flames of the Sun separate from created beings for otherwise the Sun would consume them.

1. Aeros. Here as in hermeticism and alchemy, ἀὴρ is a particular philosophical principle, substance, or archetype. As in Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, for example v.5:

καὶ ὁ ἀὴρ ἐλαφρὸς ὢν ἠκολούθησε τῶι πνεύματι, ἀναβαίνοντος αὐτοῦ μέχρι τοῦ πυρὸς ἀπὸ γῆς καὶ ὕδατος, ὡς δοκεῖν κρέμασθαι αὐτὸν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ

Since Air [ἀέρος, Aeros] is agile, it followed the pnuema, up and above Earth and Water [Acua] and as far as Fire [Pyros], to be as if it were hanging from that, there.

2. spissitudo from spissus, qv. σπιδής and cf. πυκνός. Here 'consistency' rather than 'broad' or 'dense'.

The Greek Text

ἀρχὴ <...> τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον <...>

ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσίς ἐστι τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν [Theophrastus/Simplicius]

My interpretation of meaning:

< [the] source ... of beings is the un-definitive [1] ...>

Where beings have their origin there also they cease to exist: offering payment [2] to balance, [3] one to another, their unbalance for such is the arrangement of what is passing. [4]

1. Because the beginning is fragmentary it is difficult to provide a satisfactory explanation of what is meant, although many explanations have been suggested over many centuries including the speculation that 'apeiron' is the first principle, the ἀρχὴ, of beings, with ἄπειρον almost invariably translated by words such as the boundless, infinity, the limit-less.

However, ἄπειρον is a privation of πεῖραρ, a lack of completion; a lack of a verdict; or, often overlooked, a lack of a means, a method, an instrument, to reach a particular conclusion or of a tool do a particular task, qv. Odyssey: 3.431-435, and my translation:

ὣς ἔφαθ᾽, οἱ δ᾽ ἄρα πάντες ἐποίπνυον. ἦλθε μὲν ἂρ βοῦς
ἐκ πεδίου, ἦλθον δὲ θοῆς παρὰ νηὸς ἐίσης
Τηλεμάχου ἕταροι μεγαλήτορος, ἦλθε δὲ χαλκεὺς
ὅπλ᾽ ἐν χερσὶν ἔχων χαλκήια, πείρατα τέχνης,
ἄκμονά τε σφῦραν τ᾽ ἐυποίητόν τε πυράγρην,
οἵσίν τε χρυσὸν εἰργάξετο

Such were his words, and all of his sons occupied themselves with those things
So that an ox arrived from the fields; the comrades of the vigourous Telemachus
Arrived from their well-balanced ship; the goldsmith arrived bearing in his arms
Those bronze tools with which he accomplished his art:
A hammer, anvil and well-made fire-tongs
Which he used to work gold.

Hence my suggestion here that what Anaximander might have implied is that the source of beings is 'un-definitive', incapable of resolution because we do not posses the tools, such as words, to resolve it. Which explains why he goes on to contrast δίκη with ἀδικία, which balance and unbalance I explain below.

2. Payment as in a debt owed or because of some personal need or mistake, as in our relatively recent phrase 'debt of honour'. The debt may be to a person or persons or as in ancient times to a deity either in expiation or in the hope of avoiding a misfortune wrought by some deity, for example by the "Trimorphed Moirai with their ever-heedful Furies" of the gods, Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ᾽ Ἐρινύες.

The suggestion therefore might be that the offer of payment relates to those who, despite the fact that source of beings is 'un-definitive', having tried to define it and in the process constructed a dialectic of opposites, and thus brought conflict, realize their error. As Heraclitus noted:

εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ΄ ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα [χρεών]

One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord δίκη, and that beings are naturally born by discord.

3. In respect of δίκη it here simply implies balance in contrast to the unbalance, the privation of balance, that is ἀδικία. The translations 'order' or justice or 'fitting' - like 'disorder' or injustice or 'unfitting' for ἀδικία - are too redolent of some modern or ancient morality designed to manifest 'order' or justice or what is considered fitting in contrast to their assumed dialectical opposites.

4. In respect of χρόνος, it is not here a modern abstract measurable 'time' (in ancient times by a sundial; in later times by a mechanical clock) but 'the passing' of living or of events as evident in the Agamemnon:

ποίου χρόνου δὲ καὶ πεπόρθηται πόλις 278

Then - how long has it been since the citadel was ravaged?

τίς δὲ πλὴν θεῶν ἅπαντ᾽ ἀπήμων τὸν δι᾽ αἰῶνος χρόνον 554-5

Who - except for the gods - passes their entire life without any injury at all?

Imbalance And Opposites

What I find in these fragments attributed to Anaximander is germane to our perception of our human physis and of how we have tried to understand it through words - denotata - and thus by certain named 'principles', and that ultimately we have to accept that we cannot, should not, attempt to understand it through words which bring-into-being a named opposite and thus a conflict between those perceived, believed in, and conflicting dialectical opposites with their attendant strife, discord, enmity, hatred, and suffering. That such a wordful perception is un-definitive because the tools we have hitherto manufactured and rely on are useless.

Thus, my own fallible answer to Aristotle's question of whether or not such principles are universal or individual is that they are ineluctably personal, with all we can presently hope do is use the wordless knowing of our empathy, and of our own pathei-mathos, as a guide.

David Myatt

21st February 2024

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Lawh al-Zumurrud

Prefatory Note

An interpretation of meaning of the Arabic text Lawh al-Zumurrud from Sirr al-khaliqa, dating from between the eighth and ninth century CE. [1] The text is also known by its Latin title Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis and by the English title The Emerald Tablet.

I have added some footnotes to explain unusual words in my interpretation, with an Appendix providing the Latin text from the *Secretum Secretorum* as given in a critical edition, published by Oxford University Press in 1920, of a thirteenth century manuscript in the Bodleian Library. Which text, for some reason, does not mention telesmi, although an alternative sixteenth century Latin text, translated by Isaac Newton, does. [2]

Much has been written about the 'emerald tablet' which is considered to be one of the primary texts of hermetic philosophy and of alchemy. For this second edition I have extended my footnotes, included as Appendix II an updated version of my 2017 essay *Talismata In The Picatrix*, and corrected a few typos.

David Myatt
January 30th, 2024
Revised February 2024

1. Ursula Weisser, *Buch über das Geheimnis der Schöpfung und die Darstellung der Natur (Buch der Ursachen) von Pseudo-Apollonios von Tyana*. Sources and Studies in the History of Arabic-Islamic Science. Aleppo, 1979.

2. The Latin is "Pater omnis telesmi totius mundi est hic". Newton's manuscript is Keynes MS 28.

Veritas is veritas [1]
For the higher is as the lower
With the lower as the higher.

The signs [2] were from The One
As all beings are from The One
Through one design:
The father, the Sun,
The mother, the Moon,
The Pnuema, [3] the womb
The Earth, the nourishment.

Telismata: [4] of the father
Guardian of balanced signs.
Pyros, [5] the Earth
Separating the harsh from the gentle.
With the gentle, [6] noble,
Ascending from Earth to Empyrean [7]
Descending from Empyrean to Earth
Influencing the higher, the lower,
The gentle, the harsh:
The illumination of the illuminated.

Thus, it is for this the Magnum Opus [7] came-into-being
For I am Hermes Trismegistus of The Wisdom.

Notes

1. Veritas. I have used the Latin *veritas* rather than the English word 'truth'. As noted in my commentary on v.14 of chapter One of the Gospel of John,

> I have chosen the Latin veritas in order to avoid the disputations - philosophical and otherwise - and the assumptions that the English word 'truth' so often now imputes and engenders, with the reader (or the listener) thus having to reflect on what veritas might, in this context, signify. In addition, ἀληθείας here suggests not some abstract, impersonal, 'truth' but rather truthfulness, sincerity, integrity: the type of person that Jesus of Nazareth is. In respect of 'veritas' suggesting such truthfulness and sincerity, qv. the entry for veritas in Lexicon Totius Latinitatis, volume 4b.

https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/myatt-gospel-john-1-5.pdf

2. Signs. cf. σημεῖᾰ in relation to God, qv. The Gospel of John, and the Signs of Allah as mentioned in the Quran. It is notable that the Gospel of John has σημεῖον and not δῦνάμεις as in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, For example, in John 3:2, οὐδεὶς γὰρ δύναται ταῦτα τὰ σημεῖα ποιεῖν ἃ σὺ ποιεῖς, ἐὰν μὴ ᾖ ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτοῦ, "for no one is able to do the signs you do unless Theos is with them."

Since *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis* was a translation of an Arabic text, σημεῖᾰ here instead of δῦνάμεις or *miraculum* seems apposite.

3. The Pneuma. The Wind as archetype, as a hermetic principle, cf. tractate III of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἀπάντων καὶ ἀκατασκευάστων, ἀποδιωρίσθη τὰ ἐλαφρὰ εἰς ὕψος καὶ τὰ βαρέα ἐθεμελιώθη ἐφ' ὑγρᾶι ἄμμωι, πυρὶ τῶν ὅλων διορισθέντων καὶ ἀνακρεμασθέντων πνεύματι ὀχεῖσθαι· καὶ ὤφθη ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐν κύκλοις ἑπτά, καὶ θεοὶ [ταῖς] ἐν ἄστρων ἰδέαις ὀπτανόμενοι, σὺν τοῖς αὐτῶν σημείοις ἅπασι, καὶ διηρθρώθη ... σὺν τοῖς ἐν αὐτῆι θεοῖς, καὶ περιειλίγη τὸ περικύκλιον ἀέρι, κυκλίωι δρομήματι πνεύματι θείωι ὀχούμενον.
>
> With all beings unformed and not yet presenced,
> What was lightsome was separated out, upward
> And what was burdensome set in fluidic ground
> With all defined through Fire, then elevated - and conveyed - by Pneuma.
> Thus the heavens became perceivable in seven spheres,
> Deities represented in the arrangements of the stars,
> With the outer revolving in the æther, and circulating by the Pnuema of theos.

https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

4. Telismata, rather than the later English word 'talisman'. As I wrote in *Telesmata In The Picatrix*, included as Appendix II,

> "Telesmata is from Greek τέλεσμα via the post-classic Latin telesma and is possibly the origin of the English word talisman, dating as that English word does from 1638.
>
> τέλεσμα in Ancient Greek meant a payment, or an offering to offset a debt or for services rendered. According to my fallible understanding, in Hellenistic times it acquired the sense of an object intended as an offering to the gods, and to lesser divinities such as daemons, as a mark of respect or in order to seek their favour or ward off their wroth. Thus if a person had toiled to make the offering, the telesma, or had at the very least exchanged goods or money for it, it was believed that such labour or such an exchange revealed that one had earned their protection or their help. The more valuable the object, the more help or protection they might expect.
>
> This belief in such offerings and their efficacy was an integral part of not only the diverse Greco-Roman paganus weltanschauungen but also of many other paganus weltanschauungen around the world, past and present, founded as such weltanschauungen are on the understanding, on the ancestral wisdom, or on the intuition that we mortals are part of a living cosmos with the gods (the divinities) and Nature considered as living beings (or as archetypes, manifestations of cosmic forces) who and which can affect us and who have affected us – as individuals, and as communities – in terms of good fortune and misfortune."

5. Pyros. Fire as archetype, cf. Heraclitus as recounted by Diogenes Laërtius:

> ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα συνεστάναιβεἰς τοῦτο ἀναλύεσθαιbπάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα καὶ πάντα ψυχῶν εἶναι καὶ δαιμόνων πλήρη
>
> The foundation/base/essence of all beings ['things'] is pyros to which they return, with all [of them] by genesis appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] to be bound together again by enantiodromia, and all filled/suffused/vivified with/by ψυχή and Dæmons.

6. Gentle, πρᾶος, a mild, balanced, temperament as in my translation of 5:1–10 of The Gospel Of Matthew, μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν, "Fortunate, the gentle, for they shall acquire the Earth", qv. https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/the-beatitudes-v1.pdf

7. Empyrean. Not 'heaven', but οὐρανός - Empyrean - the abode of the Greco-Roman gods, and also suitable for the abode of those mortals gifted by the Egyptian gods with an after-life. As I noted in my translation of 1:3 of The Gospel Of John:

> οὐρανός here is always translated as 'heaven' although the term 'heaven' - used in the context of the Gospels - now has rather different connotations than the Greek οὐρανός, with the word 'heaven' now often implying something explained by almost two thousand years of exegesis and as depicted, for example, in medieval and Renaissance Christian art. However, those hearing or reading this particular Greek gospel for the first time in the formative years of Christianity would most probably have assumed the usual Greek usage of "the heavens" in the sense of the "the star-filled firmament above" or in the sense of "the sky" or as the abode of theos and/or of the gods, ἐν οὐρανῷ θεοί [...]

> It therefore seems apposite to suggest a more neutral word than 'heaven' as a translation of οὐρανός and one which might not only be understood in various 'classical' ways by an audience of Greek speakers (such as the ways described above) but also be open to a new, and Christian, interpretation consistent with the milieu that existed when the Gospel of John was written and first heard. That is, before the exegesis of later centuries and long before post-Roman Christian iconography. Hence my suggestion of the post-classical Latin term Empyrean, which can bear the interpretation of the abode of theos and/or of the gods, of "the sky", of the "the star-filled firmament above"; and a Christian one suggested by Genesis 2.8 - παράδεισον ἐν Εδεμ (the Paradise of Eden) - and also by shamayim.
>
> https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/myatt-gospel-john-1-5.pdf

Given that *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis* was a translation of an Arabic text the sense of "Ascending from Earth to Empyrean" is also apposite because it does not directly refer to the Christian heaven.

An alternative translation would be Celestial, as in my translation of a passage from Book I, Chapter One, of Ficini's De Vita Coelitus Comparanda:

> Novem studiosorum duces.
>
> Quicunque iter illud asperum arduumque et longum ingrediuntur, quod quidem vix tandem ad excelsum novem Musarum templum assiduo labore perducit, novem omnino itineris huius ducibus indigere videntur. Quorum primi quidem tres in coelo, tres sequentes in animo, postremi tres in terra nos ducunt.
>
> Nine guides for the studious.
>
> Those proceeding along that perilous, arduous, tedious, journey will, following difficulties, finally be brought to the Temple of the Nine Muses for that journey requires nine guides to enable it to be reached: the first three toward the Celestial; the next three toward the Anima, 4 and the last three to guide us [back] to The Earth.
>
> https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2024/01/dwm-notes-on-ficini.pdf

8. Magnum Opus. The work of hermeticism, as for example explained in the Corpus Hermeticum, and the aim of alchemy which is Lapis Philosophicus. In the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticism this is described as the journey, the ἄνοδος, through the seven spheres:

> καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾶι λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῆι πρώτηι ζώνηι δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῆι δευτέραι τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆι τρίτηι τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆι τετάρτηι τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῆι πέμπτηι τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῆι ἕκτηι τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῆι ἑβδόμηι ζώνηι τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.
>
> Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait.
>
> https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

Appendix I

The Latin Text From Secretum Secretorum

Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi
Fasc. V

SECRETUM SECRETORUM

CUM GLOSSIS ET NOTULIS

TRACTATUS BREVIS ET UTILIS
AD DECLARANDUM QUEDAM OBSCURE DICTA

FRATRIS ROGERI

NUNC PRIMUM EDIDIT
ROBERT STEELE

ACCEDUNT
VERSIO ANGLICANA EX ARABICO EDITA PER
A. S. FULTON

VERSIO VETUSTA ANGLO-NORMANICA NUNC
PRIMUM EDITA

Veritas ita se habet et non est dubium, quod inferiora superioribus et superiora inferioribus respondent.

Operator miraculorum unus solus est Deus, a quo descendit [1] omnis operacio mirabilis.

Sic omnes res [2] generantur ab una sola substancia [3], una sua sola disposicione.

Quarum pater | est Sol,[4] quarum mater est Luna.[5]

Que portavit ipsam naturam per auram in utero,[6] terra impregnata est ab ea.[7]

Hinc [8] dicitur Sol causatorum pater, thesaurus miraculorum, largitor virtutum.

Ex igne [9] facta [11] est terra [10].

Separa terrenum ab igneo,[12] quia subtile dignius est grosso, et rarum spisso. Hoc fit sapienter et discrete. Ascendit enim de terra in celum, et ruit de celo in terram.[13]

[1] per creacionem et regimen universale mundi.
[2] scilicet, naturales.
[3] scilicet, celestis.
[4] scilicet generans et producens sub Deo.
[5] *Sic omnes res*, scilicet, naturales, istud potest exponi alkimistice et figurative de auro et argento, quia in rebus humanis temporalibus omnia fiunt per aurum et argentum. Unde per solem potest intelligi aurum et per lunam argentum, et hic est mos alkimistarum. Et terra quantum ad res humanas impregnatur et fecundatur per argentum, et aurum est pater miraculorum, et cetera, id est, per ipsum fiunt mirabilia in humanis rebus.

Et inde interficit [1] superiorem et inferiorem virtutem.

Sic ergo dominatur [2] inferioribus et superioribus | et tu dominaberis sursum et deorsum, tecum enim est lux luminum,[3] et propter hoc fugient a te omnes tenebre. Virtus superior vincit omnia.[4]

Omne enim rarum agit in omne densum. Et secundum disposicionem majoris mundi currit hec operacio, et propter hoc vocatur Hermogenes triplex in philosophia.[5]

Appendix II

Telesmata In The Picatrix

Telesmata is from Greek τέλεσμα via the post-classic Latin telesma and is possibly the origin of the English word talisman, dating as that English word does from 1638, with τέλεσμα in Ancient Greek meaning a payment, or an offering to offset a debt or for services rendered. According to my fallible understanding, in Hellenistic times it acquired the sense of an object intended as an offering to the gods, and to lesser divinities such as daemons, as a mark of respect or in order to seek their favour or ward off their wroth. Thus if a person had toiled to make the offering, the telesma, or had at the very least exchanged goods or money for it, it was believed that such labour or such an exchange revealed that one had earned their protection or their help. The more valuable the object, the more help or protection they might expect.

This belief in such offerings and their efficacy was an integral part of not only the diverse Greco-Roman paganus weltanschauungen but also of many other paganus weltanschauungen around the world, past and present, founded as such weltanschauungen are on the understanding, on the ancestral wisdom, or on the intuition that we mortals are part of a living cosmos with the gods (the divinities) and Nature considered as living beings (or as archetypes, manifestations of cosmic forces) who and which can affect us and who have affected us – as individuals, and as communities – in terms of good fortune and misfortune.

For such understanding, such ancestral wisdom, or such intuition included the insight that some mortal deeds were wise and some mortal deeds were unwise because wise deeds were those which aided or did not upset the natural cosmic balance and because unwise deeds – acts of hubris – did upset the natural cosmic balance and invited, sooner or later, retribution by the divinities, be such retribution personal (against the hubriatic individual) or against the family and descendants of that individual or against the community that the hubriatic individual was a part of. A pattern of hubriatic deeds which both Aeschylus and Sophocles so well described: Aeschylus in the Oresteia, and Sophocles in his Antigone and his Oedipus Tyrannus.

In respect of the Greek belief in such divinities and asking for their help there is of course that beautiful poem by Sappho [1]

> ποικιλόθρον’ ἀθανάτ Ἀφρόδιτα,
> παῖ Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
> μή μ’ ἄσαισι μηδ’ ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
> πότνια, θῦμον,
>
> ἀλλὰ τυίδ’ ἔλθ’, αἴ ποτα κἀτέρωτα
> τὰς ἔμας αὔδας ἀίοισα πήλοι
> ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα
> χρύσιον ἦλθες
>
> ἄρμ’ ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ’ ἄγον
> ὤκεες στροῦθοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
> πύκνα δίννεντες πτέρ’ ἀπ’ ὠράνωἴθε-
> ρος διὰ μέσσω·
>
> αἶψα δ’ ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ’, ὦ μάκαιρα,
> μειδιαίσαισ’ ἀθανάτωι προσώπωι
> ἤρε’ ὅττι δηὖτε πέπονθα κὤττι
> δηὖτε κάλημμι
>
> κὤττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
> μαινόλαι θύμωι· τίνα δηὖτε πείθω
> μαισ’ ἄγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα; τίς σ’, ὦ
> Ψά]πφ’, ἀδικήει;
>
> καὶ γὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
> αἰ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ’, ἀλλὰ δώσει,
> αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
> κωὐκ ἐθέλοισα.
>
> ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον
> ἐκ μερίμναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
> θῦμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον, σὺ δ’ αὔτα
> σύμμαχος ἔσσο.
>
> Deathless Aphrodite – Daughter of Zeus and maker of snares –
> On your florid throne, hear me!
> My lady, do not subdue my heart by anguish and pain
> But come to me as when before
> You heard my distant cry, and listened:

Leaving, with your golden chariot yoked, your father’s house
To move beautiful sparrows swift with a whirling of wings
As from heaven you came to this dark earth through middle air
And so swiftly arrived.

Then you my goddess with your immortal lips smiling
Would ask what now afflicts me, why again
I am calling and what now I with my restive heart
Desired:

> Whom now shall I beguile
> To bring you to her love?
> Who now injures you, Sappho?
> For if she flees, soon shall she chase
> And, rejecting gifts, soon shall she give.
> If she does not love you, she shall do so soon
> Whatsoever is her will.

Come to me now to end this consuming pain
Bringing what my heart desires to be brought:
Be yourself my ally in this fight.

By the time the manuscripts of the Picatrix were written, as translations of a translation of an Arabic manuscript dating from some three or more centuries earlier, the concept of telesmata seems to have become somewhat divorced from its paganus origins since the Picatrix begins with a doxology to a singular God – Ad laudem et gloriam altissimi et omnipotentis Dei cuius est revelare suis predestinatis secreta scienciarum – echoing as it does the doxology to Allah, Al-Ahad, in that earlier Arabic manuscript and containing as that Arabic manuscript does several quotations from the Quran.

Thus, and again according to my fallible understanding, it seems to me that, given the importance attached in both the Latin and the Arabic text to telesmata [2] – the locus has, despite such doxologies, moved away from the paganus understanding of mortals as an integral (Ciceronian) balancing part of the cosmos, as part of Nature and of their community and personally aware of the consequences of hubris, toward the εἶδος – the abstraction – of mortals as individuals who can by telesmata and other means achieve certain personal desires or bring about certain changes beneficial to themselves. Almost as if telesmata and other similar means have replaced the numinous, the paganus, awareness of our status as mortals who depend on the harmony that the older divinities represented, manifest as this awareness is in the phrase *memento homo* [3]. A phrase adopted by the Roman Catholic church in the form "memento homo quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris," [4] and which church, despite its faults, perhaps for centuries kept alive at least something of the paganus understanding of the error of hubris, its awareness of our temporary mortal life and of our fallible mortal nature.

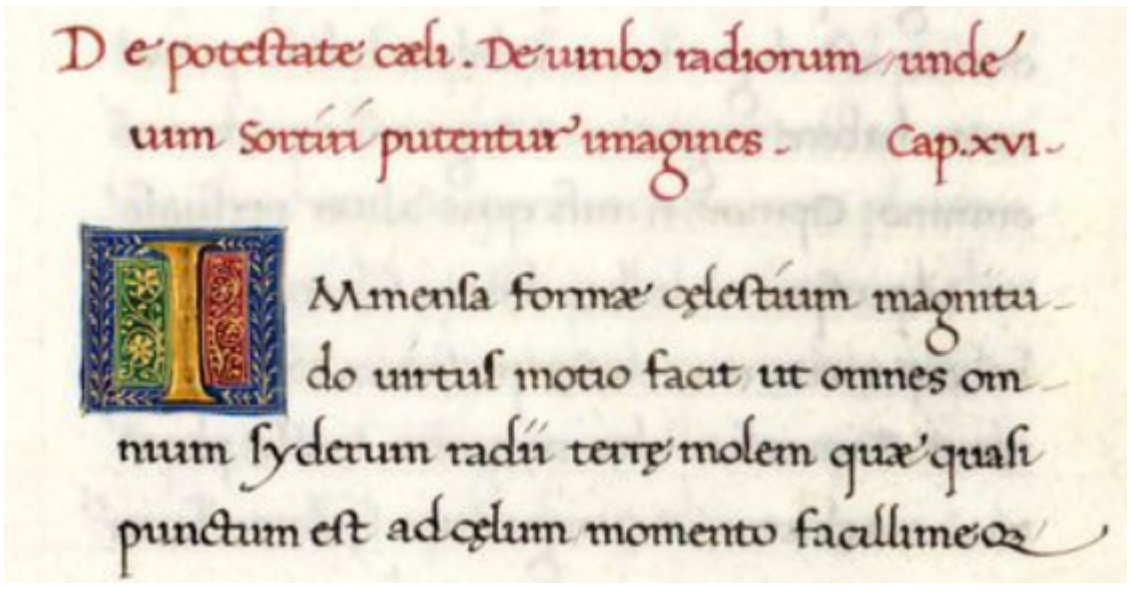
DW Myatt
2017

Note: This text is an edited version of a communication sent this year to someone who had enquired about the relation, if any, between the talismans described in the Latin text entitled Picatrix and Greco-Roman pagan beliefs.

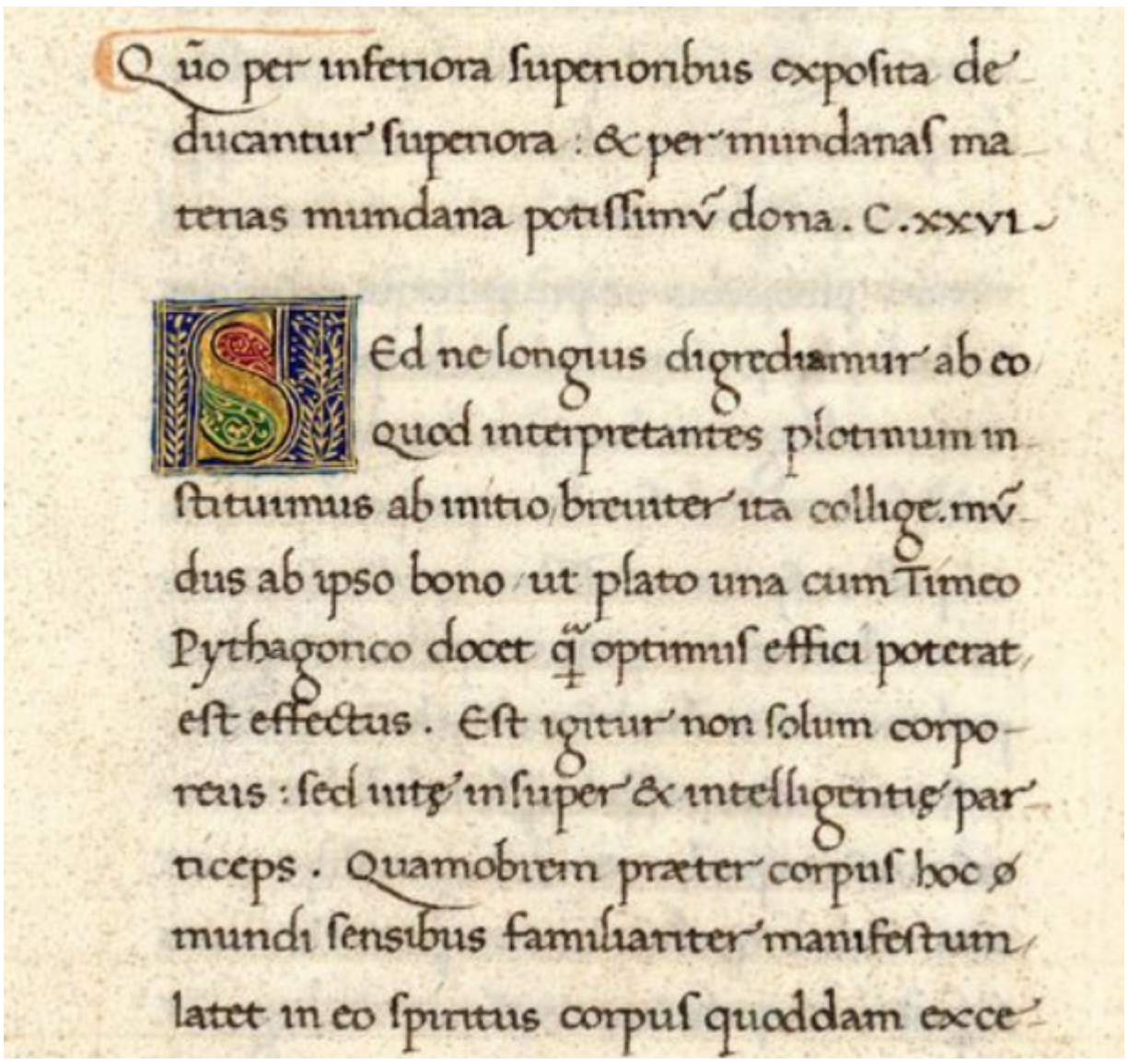
---

[1] My translation. The Greek text is that of Lobel and Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*, Oxford 1955.

[2] In the Picatrix the word used is imago, usually (in my opinion) mis-translated by the fairly recent (c.1638) word 'talisman' and which English word implies 'a semblance', a crafting by someone of something material which of itself presenced, was a semblance of, what was 'higher', numinous, by something which was 'lower', material, with such a presencing described by Marsilii Ficini in his *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*.


De potestate cæli. De umbo radiorum unde
uim sortiri putentur imagines. Cap.xvi.
Mmensa formæ cælestium magnitu
do uirtus motio facit ut omnes om
nium syderum radii terræ molem quæ quasi
punctum est ad cælum momento facillime

From a 1489 manuscript:
Marsilii Ficini, De Vita Coelitus Comparanda, XVI


Quo per inferiora superioribus exposita de-
ducantur superiora : & per mundanas ma-
terias mundana potissimū dona. C.xxvi.

Sed ne longius digrediamur ab eo
quod interpretantes plotinum in-
stituimus ab initio, breuiter ita colligemū-
dus ab ipso bono ut plato una cum Timeo
Pythagonco docet q̄ optimus effici poterat,
est effectus. Est igitur non solum corpo-
reus : sed uitę insuper & intelligentię par-
ticeps. Quamobrem præter corpus hoc ø
mundi sensibus familiariter manifestum,
latet in eo spiritus corpus quoddam exce-

De Vita Coelitus Comparanda, XXVI

Interestingly, imago occurs in the Latin version of the nine doxologies - v. 31 - of the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, cuius universa natura imago nata est, with the original Greek being οὗ πᾶσα φύσις εἰκὼν ἔφυ which I translate as "you who engender all physis as eikon", with eikon suggestive of what Maximus of Constantinople in his Mystagogia [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence.

[3] Although the use of a similar phrase about mortality in the Triumphus is disputed, there is evidence to suggest that during those victory processions in Rome the triumphant General was reminded by someone of his mortality, qv. M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007. p. 272f.

[4] "Recall, mortal, you are dust and you will revert to being dust."

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Some Notes On De Vita Coelitus Comparanda
And Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis

Chapter One

The genesis of this essay was some correspondence from a reader of my translation of *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis* who enquired about the Latin text of the two illustrations from a manuscript of De Vita Coelitus Comparanda that I included. In response, I translated the relevant passages, in the process discovering some interesting connections to the Corpus Hermeticum, alchemy, and the Art (Latin Ars) of μαγικός as understood by Pliny the Elder, Ovid, and Tacitus, with Pliny in Book XXX, iii relating that Homer's Odyssey is based upon that Art and recounts a legend that Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, and Plato, all journeyed abroad to learn that Art. [1]

The context of those passages in my *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis* are the heading and the beginning of Book I, Chapter One of *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* and the heading and the beginning of Book III.

The heading and the beginning of Book I, Chapter One of *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* are, together with my translation:

> Novem studiosorum duces.
>
> Quicunque iter illud asperum arduumque et longum ingrediuntur, quod quidem vix tandem ad excelsum novem Musarum templum assiduo labore perducit, novem omnino itineris huius ducibus indigere videntur. Quorum primi quidem tres in coelo, tres sequentes in animo, postremi tres in terra nos ducunt.
>
> Nine guides for the studious. [2]
>
> Those proceeding along that perilous, arduous, tedious, journey will, following difficulties, finally be brought to the Temple of the Nine Muses for that journey requires nine guides to enable it to be reached: the first three toward the Celestial; [3] the next three toward the Anima, [4] and the last three to guide us [back] to The Earth.

Καλλιόπη, The Beautiful-Voiced Muse
(Pio Clementino Museum, Vatican City)

ταῦτ᾽ ἄρα Μοῦσαι ἄειδον, Ὀλύμπια δώματ᾽ ἔχουσαι,
ἐννέα θυγατέρες μεγάλου Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖαι,
Κλειώ τ᾽ Εὐτέρπη τε Θάλειά τε Μελπομένη τε
Τερψιχόρη τ᾽ Ἐρατώ τε Πολύμνιά τ᾽ Οὐρανίη τε
Καλλιόπη θ᾽: ἣ δὲ προφερεστάτη ἐστὶν ἀπασέων.

Hesiod, Theogony, 75-79

Such were the things the Muses who dwell on Olympus sang:
those nine daughters born of Mighty Zeus.
Cleio, Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene,
Terpsichore, Erato, Polyhymnia, Urania,
and Kalliope who is pre-eminent among them all.

°°°

The heading and the beginning of Book III are, together with my translation:

> Marsilii Ficini Florentini Liber De Vita Coelitus Comparanda compositus ab eo inter Commentaria eiusdem in Plotinum.
>
> In quo consistat secundum Plotinum virtus favorem coelitus attrahens, scilicet in eo, quod anima mundi et stellarum daemonumque animae facile alliciuntur corporum formis accommodatis.
>
> A book by Marsilius Ficinus the Florentine Concerning Acquiring Life From The Celestial, and written around his commentaries on Plotinus.
>
> Following Plotinus, what ability is there that can worthily presence [5] the celestial? It is this: when the Forms [6] correspond to their corporeality, the anima-mundi [7] and the anima of the stars and of daemons [8] can be obtained and accommodated.

Which places into context Ficini's use in Chapter XXVI of Book III of the alchemical expression Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, which is a restatement of an expression from the Arabic text in *Sirr al-khalīqa* dating from several centuries earlier, which I translated as

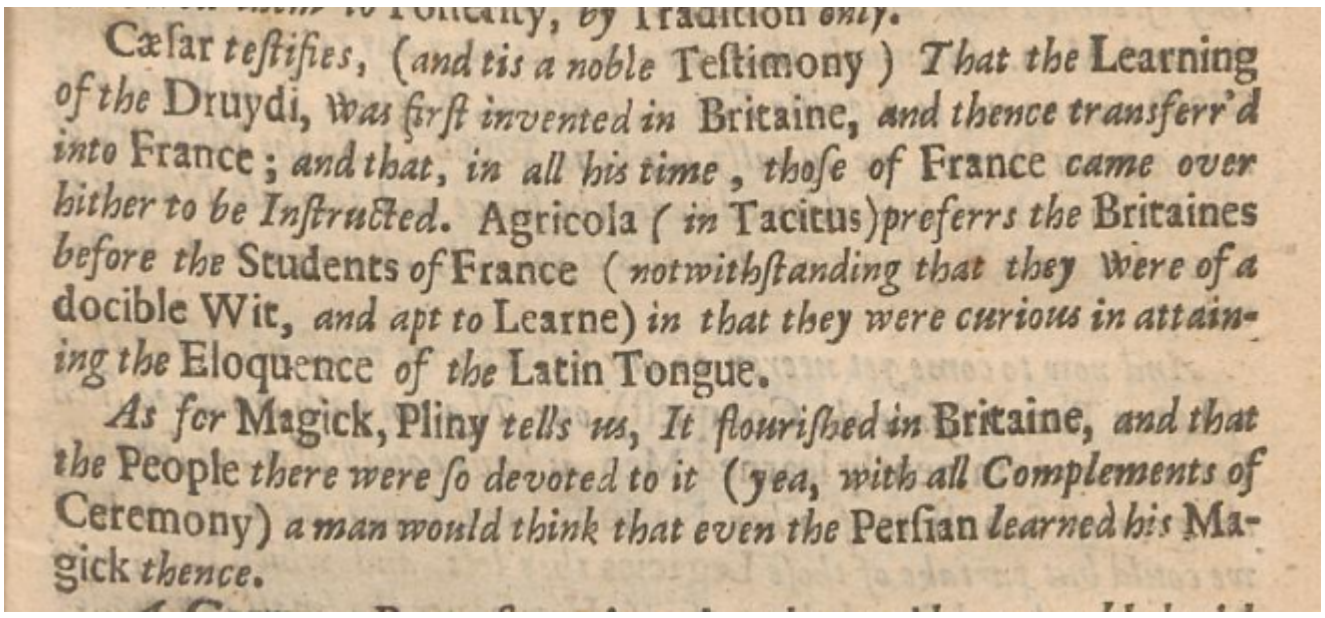
> For the higher is as the lower
> With the lower as the higher.

Which brings us to the Latin text of the two manuscript illustrations mentioned above published in my Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis.

°°°

Notes On Terms Used

1. The term μαγικός - Latin magicas - was later translated, in my view mistranslated, as 'magick' and which 'magick' was described by Elias Ashmole in relation to the Druids in his *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* published in 1652:



Cæſar *teſtifies*, (*and tis a noble* Teſtimony) *That the* Learning *of the* Druydi, *was firſt invented in* Britaine, *and thence transferr'd into* France; *and that, in all his time, thoſe of* France *came over hither to be Inſtructed.* Agricola (*in* Tacitus) *preferrs the* Britaines *before the* Students *of* France (*notwithſtanding that they were of a* docible Wit, *and apt to* Learne) *in that they were curious in attaining the* Eloquence *of the* Latin Tongue.

As for Magick, Pliny *tells us, It flouriſhed in* Britaine, *and that the* People *there were ſo devoted to it* (*yea, with all Complements of* Ceremony) *a man would think that even the* Perſian *learned his* Magick *thence.*

2. Studiosus. Studious, rather than 'eager'.

3. Celestial rather than 'heavenly' since stars and planets are meant.

4. Anima. Retaining the Latin, and not translating as 'soul' since it is a basic hermetic and alchemical principle later appropriated and reinterpreted by Carl Jung. The context is the expression "anima mundi" which Ficini goes on to use and which is usually translated as "world-soul" - German Weltseele - whereas what is implied is ψυχὴ κόσμου with κόσμος as suggested in the Corpus Hermeticum (Poemandres:17, Tractate VIII:1 and by Cicero) an ordered structure which includes we human beings, the Earth, and the celestial.

Thus an alternative would be to translate as psyche, as in Tractate VIII, 1 of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> Περὶ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, ὦ παῖ, νῦν λεκτέον, τρόπωι μὲν ποίωι ἀθάνατος ἡ ψυχή, ἐνέργεια δὲ ποταπή ἐστι συστάσεως σώματος καὶ διαλύσεως. περὶ οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν ὁ θάνατος, ἀλλὰ νόημά ἐστιν ἀθανάτου προσηγορίας, ἢ κενὸν ἔργον ἢ κατὰ στέρησιν τοῦ πρώτου γράμματος λεγόμενος θάνατος ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀθάνατος. ὁ γὰρ θάνατος ἀπωλείας ἐστίν· οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν ἐν τῶι κόσμωι ἀπόλλυται. εἰ γὰρ δεύτερος θεὸς ὁ κόσμος καὶ ζῶιον ἀθάνατον, ἀδύνατόν ἐστι τοῦ ἀθανάτου ζώιου μέρος τι ἀποθανεῖν· πάντα δὲ τὰ ἐν τῶι κόσμωι μέρη ἐστὶ τοῦ κόσμου, μάλιστα δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, τὸ λογικὸν ζῶιον.
>
> It is regarding psyche and the corporeal that, my son, we now must speak: of why psyche is deathless and how its vigour assembles and separates the corporeal. For there is no death of what-is, only an apprehension grounded in the denotatum 'deathless', either through unavailing toil or, by discarding the important part, that what is called deathless is deathful. That is, for the deathful there is a loss. But nothing of the Kosmos is ever lost, for if Kosmos is a second theos and a deathless living being then it is not possible for any portion of such a deathless living being to be lost since all beings of Kosmos are part of Kosmos, as most certainly are mortals, the noetic living being.

Notes of the translation:

corporeal. σῶμα. Here, the context - qv. for example the following τῶν γὰρ οὐρανίων τὰ σώματα μίαν τάξιν ἔχει in section 4 and τοῦ δὲ ἔννοιαν λαμβάνει ὡς ἀσωμάτου καὶ νοῦ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ in section 5 - suggests corporeal rather than a literal body. A subtle distinction, between "of the nature of matter" and a specific type of "physical body". Compare also the fourth tractate: ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου, τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἄλλῳ τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον.

apprehension. νόημα. cf. Poemandres 3, "I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings."

denotatum. For προσηγορία. In this case, the denotatum - the naming - is the word 'deathless'.

the noetic living being. τὸ λογικὸν ζῷον. The word λογικός imputes the sense of both the faculty of speech and the faculty of thought, something well-expressed by Sophocles: φθέγμα καὶ ἀνεμόεν φρόνημα καὶ ἀστυνόμους ὀργὰς ἐδιδάξατο καὶ δυσαύλων πάγων ὑπαίθρεια καὶ δύσομβρα φεύγειν βέλη παντοπόρος, (Antigone, 355f).

There is also in Tractate XI:14 the enigmatic

> ζωὴ δέ ἐστιν ἕνωσις νοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς· θάνατος δὲ οὐκ ἀπώλεια τῶν συναχθέντων, διάλυσις δὲ τῆς ἑνώσεως
>
> Life is the enosis of perceiverance and psyche, while death is not the loss of what was joined but the end of enosis.

Which as I explained in my commentary on the verse returns us to the mention of Plotinus by Ficini:

> enosis. ἕνωσις. A transliteration given that it is a mystical term with a particular meaning and describes something more than is denoted by the ordinary English word 'union'. It was, for example used by Plotinus, by Maximus of Constantinople, and was part of the mystic philosophy attributed to Pseudo- Dionysius, The Areopagite - qv. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca. vol IV, 396A. 1857 - and denoted, for Plotinus, a desirable ascent (ἄνοδος) and a 'merging with The One', and for both the Areopagite and Maximus of Constantinople a self-less mystical experience of God.

To translate as psyche has a long history in English, dating back to 1559. In 1918, DeWitt Burton published a monograph - listing, with quotations, the various senses of πνεῦμα - titled *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918).

5. The term 'presenced' is from the noun 'presencing' (derived from the Latin praesentia) and means "the action or process of making some-thing manifest and/or present and/or established."

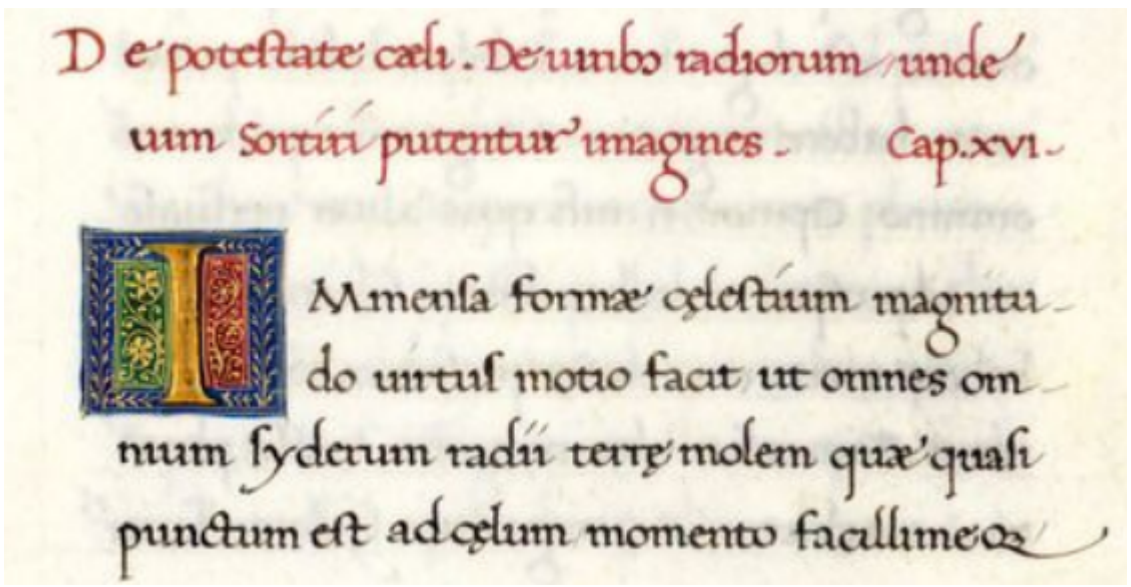
6. Formis. Forms, such as a human manufactured shape/artefact. Thus the physical, earthly, corporeal form or shape is a mimesis (μἵμησις) of a celestial or several celestial ones. Which corporeal Form could be a telesmata into which what is celestial can be presenced, drawn-down. Regarding telesmata, qv the appendix *Telesmata In The Picatrix* in my *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis*.

7. See note 4 for the context.

8. Daemons. The guardian entities of sacred places who could bring fortune or misfortune to human beings, qv. the saying attributed to Heraclitus as recorded by Diogenes Laërtius:

> ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα συνεστάναι εἰς τοῦτο ἀναλύεσθαι πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα καὶ πάντα ψυχῶν εἶναι καὶ δαιμόνων πλήρη
>
> The foundation/base/essence of all beings ['things'] is pyros to which they return, with all [of them] by genesis appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] to be bound together again by enantiodromia, and all filled/suffused/vivified with/by ψυχή and Dæmons.

Chapter Two


De potestate cæli. De uiribus radiorum unde
uim sortiri putentur imagines. Cap.xvi.
Mmensa formæ cælestium magnitu
do uirtus motio facit ut omnes om
nium syderum radii terræ molem quæ quasi
punctum est ad cælum momento facillimeq

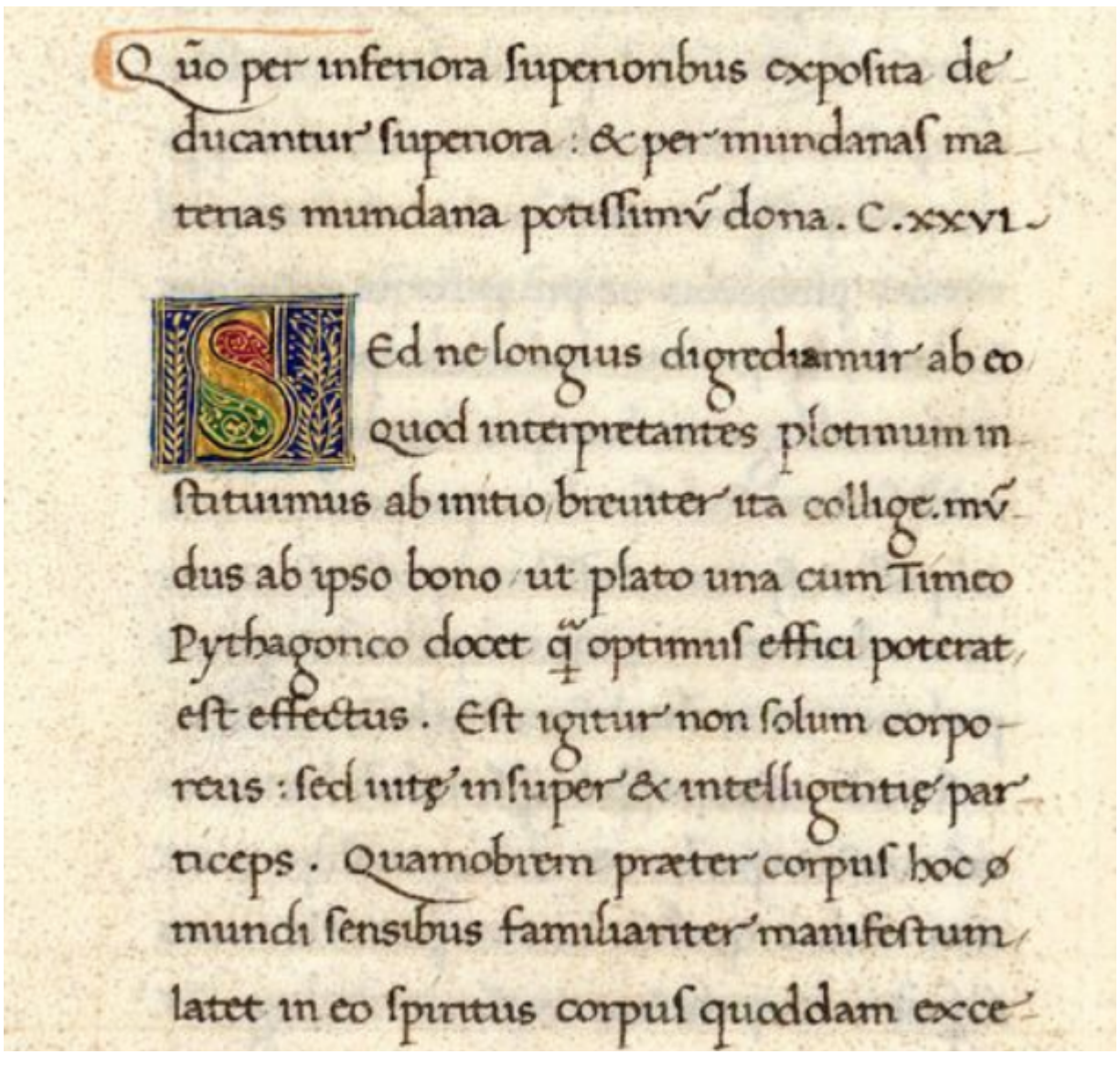
The Latin text and my translation of this image, from my Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis, of the beginning of Ficini's Chapter XVI are:

> De potestate coeli. De viribus radiorum, unde vim sortiri putentur imagines.

On the operation of the celestial. On the potency of emanations [1] on which telesmata [2] are considered to draw.

Immensa ferme coelestium magnitudo, virtus, motio facit, ut omnes omnium siderum radii terrae molem, quae quasi punctum est ad coelum, momento facillimeque usque ad centrum recti penetrent, quod omnes astronomi confitentur.

The immense magnitude, potency and movement of the celestial results in the emanations entering the bulk of the Earth, just a point compared to the celestial, with no difficulty and to its centre, as all astronomers agree.


Quo per inferiora superioribus exposita de
ducantur superiora: & per mundanas ma
terias mundana potissimū dona. C.xxvi.
Sed ne longius digrediamur ab eo
quod interpretantes plotinum in
stituimus ab initio breuiter ita colligē. mū
dus ab ipso bono ut plato una cum Timeo
Pythagonco docet q̄ optimus effici poterat,
est effectus. Est igitur non solum corpo
reus: sed uitę insuper & intelligentię par
ticeps. Quamobrem præter corpus hoc ø
mundi sensibus familiariter manifestum,
latet in eo spiritus corpus quoddam exce

The Latin text and my translation of this part of Chapter XXVI:

> Quo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona.

> How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presenced [3] therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned.
>
> Sed ne longius digrediamur ab eo, quod interpretantes Plotinum instituimus ab initio, breviter ita collige: mundus ab ipso bono (ut Plato una cum Timaeo Pythagorico docet), quam optimus effici poterat, est effectus. Est igitur non solum corporeus, sed vitae insuper et intelligentiae particeps.
>
> However, to be concise lest we digress too far from our interpretation of Plotonus: Mundus [4] as Plato and Timeus the Pythagorean informed us, was by Fairness [5] itself able to be optimally arranged. Thus it is not solely corporeal, but with Life and Perceiveration [6] and the ability to perceive and discern what is perceived.

°°°

Notes On Terms Used

1. Emanations. Not 'rays' or anything similar. Emanations of the divine body' sent down as human beings:

> κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ζώιου ἀθανάτου ζῶιον θνητόν, καὶ ὁ μὲν κόσμος τῶν ζώιων ἐπλεονέκτει τὸ ἀείζωον, καὶ τοῦ κόσμου τὸν λόγον καὶ τὸν νοῦν. θεατὴς γὰρ ἐγένετο τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἐθαύμασε καὶ ἐγνώρισε τὸν ποιήσαντα.
>
> A cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings,
> For just as the ever-living cosmic order had an advantage over them
> So did they have an advantage over other living beings in their cosmos
> Because of Logos and Perceiverance.
> Thus did mortals perceive the works of theos, admire them,
> Gaining knowledge of their creator.
>
> Tractate IV:2

Apposite here is my commentary of that verse:

> Hence why the twenty-sixth chapter of the book De Vita Coelitus Comparanda by Marsilii Ficini (published in 1489 CE) has as its heading:
> Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona.
>
> > How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presenced therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned.
>
> Also, in respect of ἄνθρωπος I have used here - as in my Poemandres - the gender neutral 'human being' instead of the more usual 'man', and also - as
> there - occasionally used the term 'mortal' when the context suggests it. Regarding 'the cosmic order' (κόσμος) itself qv. Poemandres 7; 14, and Ιερός
> Λόγος 4:
>
> > τὸ γὰρ θεῖον ἡ πᾶσα κοσμικὴ σύγκρασις φύσει ἀνανεουμένη· ἐν γὰρ τῶι θείωι καὶ ἡ φύσις καθέστηκεν
> >
> > The divine is all of that mixion: renewance of the cosmic order through Physis
> > For Physis is presenced in the divine.
> >
> > mixion. Alternate (old) spelling of mixtion, meaning the condition or state of being mixed, melded, compounded, combined.

2. Regarding telesmata, qv the appendix *Telesmata In The Picatrix* in my *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis*.

3. The term 'presenced' is from the noun 'presencing' (derived from the Latin praesentia) and means "the action or process of making some-thing manifest and/or present and/or established."

4. Mundus. Not simply 'the earth' but κόσμος, as in Tractate IV of the Corpus Hermeticum: κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον, a cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings."

5. Bonum. Not an abstract or theological 'good' subject to exegesis, but personal fairness, equity, balance, nobility manifest in deeds.

6. Intellegentia. Not 'intelligence' which has too many irrelevant modern connotations but perceiveration as in Tractate IV:2-4 of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ζώιου ἀθανάτου ζῶιον θνητόν, καὶ ὁ μὲν κόσμος τῶν ζώιων ἐπλεονέκτει τὸ ἀείζωον, καὶ τοῦ κόσμου τὸν λόγον καὶ τὸν νοῦν. θεατὴς γὰρ ἐγένετο τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἐθαύμασε καὶ ἐγνώρισε τὸν ποιήσαντα.
>
> τὸν μὲν οὖν λόγον, ὦ Τάτ, ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐμέρισε, τὸν δὲ νοῦν οὐκέτι, οὐ φθονῶν τισιν· ὁ γὰρ

φθόνος οὐκ ἔνθεν ἔρχεται, κάτω δὲ συνίσταται ταῖς τὸν νοῦν μὴ ἐχόντων ἀνθρώπων ψυχαῖς. – Διὰ τί οὖν, ὦ πάτερ, οὐ πᾶσιν ἐμέρισε τὸν νοῦν ὁ θεός; – Ἠθέλησεν, ὦ τέκνον, τοῦτον ἐν μέσωι ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὥσπερ ἆθλον ἱδρῦσθαι.

– Καὶ ποῦ αὐτὸν ἱδρύσατο; – Κρατῆρα μέγαν πληρώσας τούτου κατέπεμψε, δοὺς κήρυκα, καὶ ἐκέλευσεν αὐτῶι κηρύξαι ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καρδίαις τάδε· βάπτισον σεαυτὴν ἡ δυναμένη εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ πιστεύουσα ὅτι ἀνελεύσηι πρὸς τὸν καταπέμψαντα τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ γνωρίζουσα ἐπὶ τί γέγονας. ὅσοι μὲν οὖν συνῆκαν τοῦ κηρύγματος καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τέλειοι ἐγένοντο ἄνθρωποι, τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι· ὅσοι δὲ ἥμαρτον τοῦ κηρύγματος, οὗτοι μὲν οἱ λογικοί, τὸν νοῦν μὴ προσειληφότες, ἀγνοοῦντες ἐπὶ τί γεγόνασιν καὶ ὑπὸ τίνων,

[2] A cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings,
For just as the ever-living cosmic order had an advantage over them
So did they have an advantage over other living beings in their cosmos
Because of Logos and Perceiverance.
Thus did mortals perceive the works of theos, admire them,
Gaining knowledge of their creator.

[3] Thus, Thoth, to all mortals logos was assigned, but not perceiverance
Even though there was no ill-will, for such ill-will arrives not from there
But below, associated with mortals whose Psyche does not convey Perceiverance.
On account of what, father, did theos not assign perceiverance to all?
Son, the desire was to position it half-way between those psyches, as a reward.

[4] Where, then, was it placed?
In that large repleteful chaldron which was dispatched down
With an envoy assigned to declaim to the hearts of mortals:
If you have strength enough, immerse yourself in the chaldron
Should you accept you can ascend -
Having discovered how you came-into-being -
To the one who dispatched down that chaldron.
The many who understood that declaration and were immersive with perceiveration
Gained a certain knowledge, becoming more complete mortals
Through having received the perceiveration
While the many who misunderstood that declaration,
Having logos without the addition of perceiveration,
Are unperceptive regarding how and why they came-into-being.

Summa

The "perilous, arduous, tedious, journey" mentioned by Ficini can lead to the knowledge of "the operation of the celestial [and] the potency of emanations" and thus to an understanding of telesmata snd of how they are a mimesis, μῖμησις.

The tedious journey can be an alchemical one, a hermetic ἄνοδος as described in the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum; or a studious one involving alchemical texts such as Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis, Ghayat al-Ḥakim and its Latin version titled Picatrix; or a more 'occult' one, based on mimesis and the Art of μαγικός, such as outlined in De Vita Coelitus Comparanda.

David Myatt
January 26th 2024

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ΕΡΜΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΙΣΜΕΓ.

ϖρὸς τὸν υἱὸν Τὰτ ἐν ὄρϕ λόγος ἀπόκρυφος
ϖερὶ παλιγγενεσίας, καὶ σιγῆς ἐπαγγελίας.

Ν τοῖς γενικοῖς ὦ πάτερ, αἰνιγματωδῶς, καὶ οὐ τηλαυγῶς ἔφησας ϖερὶ θεότητος διαλεγόμενος· καὶ οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψας, Φάνθωνος μηδένα δεῖσθαι ϕωνῶν ϖερὶ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας, ἐμοῦ τέ σου ἱκέτου γενομένου ὑπὲ τῆς τοῦ ὄρεως μεταβάσεως, μὴ δέ σε ἐμοὶ διαλεχθῆναι, καὶ πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν, ὅτι τοῦτον

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Some Notes On Translating Tractate XIII

As with many of the tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum, the Greek text of tractate XIII provides an interesting insight into ancient Hellenic paganism and mysticism. It also – as with most of those tractates – presents the translator with certain problems, sometimes related to textual corruption, sometimes grammatical (should ῥοίζῳ, for example, in v. 9 of XIII be related to νικηθεῖσαι or to ἐξέπτησαν) and many of which problems concern the variety of meanings which can be assigned to certain words, as for instance in the important matter of νοῦς which is invariably translated as either "intellect" or as "mind", neither of which is satisfactory especially given what both of those English words now often denote almost two thousand years after those Greek tractates were written.

My own choice in this tractate in respect of νοῦς – as in my translations of other Hermetic tractates – is perceiveration/perceiverance, which, even though such English words hint at what I believe νοῦς meant and implied esoterically and philosophically in Hellenistic times, are not entirely satisfactory. The only reasonable alternative seems to be a transliteration, as I do in this tractate – and have done in other tractates – in respect of λόγος, θεός and several other Greek words.

However, given that the goal of the translator is to provide for the general reader an intelligible interpretation of the text, to utilize transliterations for every problematic word would fail to accomplish that goal. Which is why the translator has to use their judgement and why every translation is 'an interpretation of meaning'.

Such problematic words occur not only in the title of tractate XIII but also from the very first line of the text. In respect of the title – Ερμού του τρισμεγίστου προς τον υιόν Τάτ εν όρει λόγος απόκρυφος περί παλιγγενεσίας και σιγής επαγγελία – there is the question of translating (i) Τάτ, (ii) λόγος απόκρυφος, (iii) παλιγγενεσία, and (iv) ἐπαγγελία. In respect of the first line there is the question, at the very beginning, of Ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς, and what ὦ πάτερ – and the related ὦ τέκνον – might imply.

All of which questions – and the many subsequent ones together with the Cantio Arcana (The Esoteric Song) of sections 17 and 18 – make tractate XIII most interesting in regard to ancient Hellenic paganism and mysticism.

Title

A conventional translation of the title (by GRS Mead) is: "Concerning Rebirth and the Promise of Silence Of Thrice-greatest Hermes unto Tat his Son."

My translation, however, is:

> "On A Mountain: Hermes Trismegistus To His Son Thoth, An Esoteric Discourse Concerning Palingenesis And The Requirement of Silence."

Which translation requires some explanation:

> *Thoth*. As in other tractates I translate Τάτ by Thoth, avoiding the conventional *Tat* which, in English, has a colloquial meaning inappropriate here. As to which 'Thoth' is meant, the consensus is that in this and some other tractates it refers to the son (possibly biologically or more probably metaphorically) of Hermes Trismegistus who himself was named by the Greeks as Thoth, with the Τάτ of some other tractates being a

scribal corruption of the name Thoth.

Esoteric Discourse. λόγος απόκρυφος. While 'esoteric' is an apt translation in regard to απόκρυφος, 'discourse' is not entirely satisfactory in respect of λόγος since it could be here interpreted to mean 'disclosure' or 'explanation'. However, given what follows in section 1 – πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν…παραδιδόναι μοι – 'discourse' does seem appropriate.

Palingenesis. Rather than ascribe a particular meaning to παλιγγενεσία – such as 'rebirth' or 'regeneration' – I have chosen the English word palingenesis (from the Latin palingenesia) with that word explained by what follows in this particular discourse, qv. sections 12 and 13.

Requirement. The sense of ἐπαγγελία here, given what is discussed in this tractate, is 'requirement' rather than the strident 'command' or what is implied by the rather vague word 'promise'.

The First Line

The first part of the first line of XIII is: Ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς, ὦ πάτερ, αἰνιγματωδῶς καὶ οὐ τηλαυγῶς ἔφρασας περὶ θειότητος διαλεγόμενος.

Conventionally: "In the General Sermons, father, thou didst speak in riddles most unclear, conversing on Divinity."

My translation is:

When, father, you in the Exoterica conversed about divinity your language was enigmatic and obscure.

Which translation, as with title, requires some explanation:

Father. The Greek ὦ πάτερ – literally 'my father' – is a polite form of address, akin to the English 'sir'. Similarly, ὦ τέκνον – 'my son' – is a polite reply. Given the esoteric nature of the text, a possible interpretation here of ὦ πάτερ would be 'Master', and of ὦ τέκνον 'my pupil'.

in the Exoterica. Ἐν τοῖς γενικοῖς. Since the term γενικῶν λόγων occurs in tractate X it is reasonable to assume that γενικός here refers to the same thing although the meaning of the term is moot given that no details are provided in this tractate nor in tractate X, nor in Stobaeus – *Excerpts*, III, 1 and VI, 1 – where the term also occurs. While most translators have assumed that it refers to 'generic' things or 'generalities' and thus (by adding λόγοι) have opted for an expression such as 'General Sermons', and given that a transliteration – such as genikois or genikoi – is awkward, I have in respect of the γενικοὶ opted for exoterica (from the Latin via the Greek τὰ ἐξωτερικά) with the meaning of "exoteric treatises designed for or suitable to the generality of disciples or students," with the plausible suggestion thus being that there are exoteric Hermetic treatises and esoteric Hermetic treatises, with Reitzenstein describing these other treatises as διεξοδικοί λόγοι (R.A. Reitzenstein. *Poimandres*. Teubner, Leipzig. 1904. p.118) a distinction he also mentioned in his later work *Die Hellenistischen Mysterien Religionen*. One such esoteric treatise is tractate XIII.

The Esoteric Song

This much translated part of XIII has, in my opinion, been somewhat misunderstood given, for example, that θεὸς has invariably been translated by 'God' – implying as that word now so often does the God of Christianity – and φῶς (as in translations of the New Testament) translated by 'light', with ἀλήθεια as some kind of abstract 'truth', and with ὕμνος as 'hymn' suggestive as that English word now so often is of the hymns of Christian worship.

Conventionally, the first few verses are translated along the following lines:

"Let every nature of the World receive the utterance of my hymn!
Open thou Earth! Let every bolt of the Abyss be drawn for me. Stir not, ye Trees!
I am about to hymn creation's Lord, both All and One.
Ye Heavens open, and ye Winds stay still; and let God's deathless Sphere receive my word."

My translation [1] is as follows:

Let every Physis of Kosmos favourably listen to this song.
Gaia: be open, so that every defence against the Abyss is opened for me;
Trees: do not incurvate;
For I now will sing for the Master Artisan,
For All That Exists, and for The One.
Open: you Celestial Ones; and you, The Winds, be calm.
Let the deathless clan of theos accept this, my logos.

Which, for me at least, evokes – as tractate XIII does in its entirety – something redolent of paganism rather than of Christianity.

David Myatt
2017

[1] https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

Image credit:
The beginning of tractate XIII from the book *Mercvrii Trismegisti Pœmandres*, published in Paris in 1554

Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum

Three of the many Greek terms of interest in respect of understanding the varied weltanschauungen outlined in the texts that comprise the Corpus Hermeticum are ἀγαθός and νοῦς and θεός, with conventional translations of these terms as 'good' and 'Mind' and 'god' (or God) imparting the sense of reading somewhat declamatory sermons about god/God and 'the good' familiar from over a thousand years of persons preaching about Christianity interspersed with definitive philosophical statements about 'Mind', as if a "transcendent intelligence, rationality," or a "Mental or psychic faculty" or both, or something similar, is meant or implied.

Thus the beginning of tractate VI - τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὦ ᾽Ασκληπιέ, ἐν οὐδενί ἐστιν, εἰ μὴ ἐν μόνῳ τῷ θεῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς ἀεί - and dealing as it does with both ἀγαθός and θεός, has been translated, by Mead, as "Good, O Asclepius, is in none else save God alone; nay, rather, Good is God Himself eternally," [1] and by Copenhaver as "The good, Asclepius, is in nothing except in god alone, or rather god himself is always the good." [2]

In respect of νοῦς, a typical example is from Poemandres 12 - ὁ δὲ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ Νοῦς, ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς, ἀπεκύησεν ῎Ανθρωπον αὐτῷ ἴσον, οὗ ἡράσθη ὡς ἰδίου τόκου· περικαλλὴς γάρ, τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα ἔχων· ὄντως γὰρ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡράσθη τῆς ἰδίας μορφῆς, παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα. The beginning of this is translated by Mead as "But All-Father Mind, being Life and Light, did bring forth Man co-equal to Himself, with whom He fell in love, as being His own child for he was beautiful beyond compare," and by Copenhaver as "Mind, the father of all, who is life and light, gave birth to a man like himself whom he loved as his own child. The man was most fair: he had the father's image."

Similarly, in respect of Poemandres 22 - παραγίνομαι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ὁ Νοῦς τοῖς ὁσίοις καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς καὶ ἐλεήμοσι, τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσι, καὶ ἡ παρουσία μου γίνεται βοήθεια, καὶ εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσιν εὐλογοῦντες καὶ ὑμνοῦντες τεταγμένως πρὸς αὐτὸν τῇ στοργῇ - which is translated by Mead as "I, Mind, myself am present with holy men and good, the pure and merciful, men who live piously. [To such] my presence doth become an aid, and straightway they gain gnosis of all things, and win the Father’s love by their pure lives, and give Him thanks, invoking on Him blessings, and chanting hymns, intent on Him with ardent love," and by Copenhaver as "I myself, the mind, am present to the blessed and good and pure and merciful - to the reverent - and my presence becomes a help; they quickly recognize everything, and they propitiate the father lovingly and give thanks, praising and singing hymns affectionately and in the order appropriate to him."

As explained in various places in my commentary on tractates I, III, IV, VIII, and XI, and in two appendices [3], I incline toward the view that - given what such English terms as 'the good', Mind, and god now impute, often as a result of two thousand years of Christianity and post-Renaissance, and modern, philosophy - such translations tend to impose particular and modern interpretations on the texts and thus do not present to the reader the ancient ethos that forms the basis of the varied weltanschauungen outlined in the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum.

To avoid such impositions, and in an endeavour to express at least something of that ancient (and in my view non-Christian) ethos, I have - for reasons explained in the relevant sections of my commentary - transliterated θεὸς as theos [4], νοῦς as perceiveration, or according to context, perceiverance; and ἀγαθός as, according to context, nobility, noble, or honourable [5]. Which is why my reading of the Greek of the three examples above provides the reader with a somewhat different impression of the texts:

> ° Asclepius, the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone; indeed, theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. [6]
>
> ° Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all, brought forth in his own likeness a most beautiful mortal who, being his child, he loved.
>
> ° I, perceiveration, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

But, as I noted in respect of ἀγαθός in the *On Ethos And Interpretation* appendix, whether these particular insights of mine are valid, others will have to decide. But they - and my translations of the tractates in general - certainly, at least in my fallible opinion, convey an impression about ancient Hermeticism which is rather different from that conveyed by other translations.

David Myatt
March 2017

Extract from a letter in reply to a correspondent who, in respect of the Corpus Hermeticum, enquired about my translation of terms such as ἀγαθός and νοῦς. I have, for publication here, added a footnote which references my translations of and commentaries on five tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum.

°°°

Notes

[1] G.R.S Mead. *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*. Theosophical Society (London). 1906.

[2] B. Copenhaver. *Hermetica*. Cambridge University Press. 1992

[3] My translation of and commentary on tractates I, III, IV, and XI - and the two appendices - is available in pdf format at https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/03/08/corpus-hermeticum-i-iii-iv-xi/

My translation of and commentary on tractate VIII is available in pdf format at https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/03/20/corpus-hermeticum-viii/

[4] To be pedantic, when θεὸς is mentioned in the texts it often literally refers to 'the' theos so that at the beginning of tractate VI, for example, the reference is to 'the theos' rather than to 'god'.

[5] In respect of 'the good' - τὸ ἀγαθόν - as 'honourable', qv. Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, LXXI, 4, "summum bonum est quod honestum est. Et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt."

[6] The suggestion seems to be that 'the theos' is the origin, the archetype, of what is noble, and that only through and because of theos can what is noble be presenced and recognized for what it is, and often recognized by those who are, or that which is, an eikon of theos. Hence why in tractate IV it is said that "the eikon will guide you,"; why in tractate XI that "Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos [the eikon] of Aion, the Sun [the eikon] of Aion, and the Sun [the eikon] of mortals," and why in the same tractate it is said that "there is nothing that cannot be an eikon of theos," and why in Poemandres 31 theos is said to "engender all physis as eikon."

As I noted in my commentary - qv. especially the mention of Maximus of Constantinople in respect of Poemandres 31 - I have transliterated εἰκὼν.

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Numinosity, Denotata, Empathy, And The Hermetic Tradition

The Numinous And Denotata

The intuition, the personal experiencing, of the numinous is in my fallible opinion of fundamental importance in understanding our physis (φύσις) as human beings and our relation to Being, the source of beings, sentient or otherwise.

As I noted in my 2018 essay *From Mythoi To Empathy* [1], the term numinous derives from the classical Latin *numen* and denotes "a reverence for the divine; a divinity; divine power" with the word numen assimilated into English in the 15th century, with the English use of 'numinous' dating from the middle of the 17th century and used to signify "of or relating to a numen; revealing or indicating the presence of a divinity; divine, spiritual."

It thus has a wider meaning than that ascribed to it by Rudolf Otto in his *Das Heilige*. For him, it was manifest in the written words - 'the revelation' - of the Old and New Testaments of Christianity (qv. Das Heilige, chapters X, XI) as well as in Christian exegesis manifest in the preaching of individuals such as Martin Luther (Das Heilige, chapter XII) and in religious terms it involved 'worship' (Das Heilige, chapter XIII ff) and in philosophical terms was described by Kant's *a priori* (Das Heilige, chapter XVII). Yet Otto also wrote that is was *sui generis*, a personal emotion or feeling.

The wider meaning of the numinous results from our faculty of empathy which provides or can provide an individual intuition - a wordless-knowing or awareness - of the numinous, and as a personal human faculty empathy has a personal horizon and thus cannot be extrapolated from such a personal knowing into some-thing supra-personal be this some-thing denotata, including an ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος, [2] or an axiom (ἀρχή) or a source (αἴτιος) for some 'revelation' or ideology or similar manifestations constructed by and dependent on appellation. In the case of a 'revelation' the source is often named as God or a god/the god (θεὸς, ὁ θεὸς) who or which are often described by a myth or mythoi.

For such extrapolation by the very nature of - the causality inherent in - denotata results in eris, a discord of opposites: for every denotatum has or developes an opposite and thus can cleave physis, as Heraclitus poetically and somewhat enigmatically expressed:

> τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ᾽ ἐόντος ἀεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπείροισιν ἐοίκασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγεῦμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅκως ἔχει· τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιοῦσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὕδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται. [3]
>
> Although this naming and expression [which I explain] exists, human beings tend to ignore it, both before and after they have become aware of it. Yet even though, regarding such naming and expression, I have revealed details of how Physis has been cleaved asunder, some human beings are inexperienced concerning it, fumbling about with words and deeds, just as other human beings, be they interested or just forgetful, are unaware of what they have done. [4]
>
> εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ΄ ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα <χρεών> [5]
>
> One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord δίκη, and that beings are naturally born by discord. [6]

78 12. HERAKLEITOS

80 [62] Orig. c. Cels. VI 42 p. 111, 11 *εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ᾽ ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα* [χρεών?].

Thus δίκη is the natural balance of conflicting opposites and thus an ancestral way of reconciliation or of resolving conflict, often misunderstood as a 'unity of opposites' with a dialectic of opposites with its inherent causality thus mistakenly considered a means to understanding, development and a believed in concept of necessary change.

The notion of discord so being born by denotata sundering physis is also and perhaps better expressed by Anaximander who like Heraclitus has been much misunderstood:

> ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσίς ἐστι τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν [7]
>
> Where beings have their origin there also they cease to exist: offering payment to balance, one to another, their unbalance for such is the arrangement of what is passing. [8]

Which expresses the causality inherent in the beings - existents, ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος - that denotata brings-into-being. They are

unbalanced, and since they are causal entities will sooner or later pass away even though in their living through the thoughts and actions of mortals they usually manifest and bring-into-being discord: hence why Heraclitus wrote εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν.

This is in contrast to the individual wordless-knowing that empathy brings-into-being, and explains the fundamental flaw of Plato's ἔλεγχος which led for example to him having Protagoras saying that the poet Simonides does not speak 'correctly', οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγει [9] even though poetry could possibly be - as an intimation of the numinous - an attempt to wordfully presence what causal abstractions conceal, with the attempt by Socrates to dispute such an assertion by Protagoras seeming to fail. [10]

Which is perhaps why Aristotle (Metaphysics, 982β) quoted a saying attributed to Simonides: θεὸς ἂν μόνος τοῦτ᾽ ἔχοι γέρας which follows ἄνδρ᾽ ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι,

> It is hard to be a purely noble person [...] a god alone has that privilege [11]

With the context of Aristotle's quotation his statement,

> ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἡ σοφία περί τινας ἀρχὰς καὶ αἰτίας ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη, δῆλον. Metaphysics, 982α
>
> It is evident that sapientia is a knowing of axioms and of sources [12]

and because

> ἀλλ᾽ οὔτε τὸ θεῖον φθονερὸν ἐνδέχεται εἶναι, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί, οὔτε τῆς τοιαύτης ἄλλην χρὴ νομίζειν τιμιωτέραν. ἡ γὰρ θειοτάτη καὶ τιμιωτάτη: τοιαύτη δὲ διχῶς ἂν εἴη μόνη: ἥν τε γὰρ μάλιστ᾽ ἂν ὁ θεὸς ἔχοι, θεία τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἐστί, κἂν εἴ τις τῶν θείων εἴη. Metaphysics, 983α
>
> it is not possible for the divine to be envious; indeed, as the maxim goes: songsters make many a false claim; nor should any other [epistêmê] be considered the more honourable, for it is divine because honourable in just two ways: if epistêmê is of the divinity or of the divine. [13]

Which returns us to whether some poetry such as the lyric attributed to Simonides as preserved by Plato can, for we mortals, be an intimation of the numinous, as some music - such as the counterpoint of JS Bach - is believed by many musicians and others to be.

If we presume to substitute 'the numinous' for 'the divine' and for 'the divinity' (the theos) then an epistêmê is τίμιος - honourable, precious, worthy, prized - if it is of, if it presences, the numinous; and it is interesting to note that, well over a thousand years after Aristotle, τίμιος in the Greek Orthodox tradition implies 'holy' as in Τίμιος Σταυρός, the Holy Cross.

In addition, as Aristotle - citing an ancient maxim - writes: παροιμίαν πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί, 'songsters make many a false claim', and that because of both the nature of denotata and our physis as human beings.

Empathy, The Hermetic Tradition, And Our Human Physis

The reality of empathy in relation to the numinous is two-fold - jumelle, as is our physis as human beings according to the Corpus Hermeticism - because although a means to appreciate, to discover, to feel, to know, the numinous without the need for mythoi, denotata and the associated exegesis, dialectic and discord, it is unappreciated, underdeveloped.

° Empathy is unappreciated, because of our physis: as is explained using Greek mythoi and in terms of the mystic hermetic tradition, in the Pœmandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> "distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. Yet, although deathless and possessing full authority, the human is still subject to wyrd. Hence, although over the harmonious structure, when within become the slave. Male-and-female since of a male-and-female father, and wakeful since of a wakeful one [...] This is a mysterium esoteric even to this day." [14]

This is further explained, again using Greek mythoi and in terms of the hermetic tradition, in tractate XI, which returns us to Aristotelian honour and takes us to where σοφία - qv. the quotation from Metaphysics, 982α above - is personified and explained as manifesting the noble, the beautiful, good fortune (εὐδαιμονία), arête, and Aion:

> "The foundation of all being is theos; of their quidditas, Aion; of their substance, Kosmos. The craft of theos: Aion; the work of Aion: Kosmos, which is not just a coming-into-being but always is, from Aion. Thus it cannot be destroyed since Aion is not destroyable nor will Kosmos cease to be since Aion surrounds it.
>
> But the Sophia of theos is what?
>
> The noble, the beautiful, good fortune, arête, and Aion. From Aion to Kosmos: exemption from death, and continuance of substance.
>
> For that geniture depends on Aion just as Aion does on theos. Geniture and Kronos - in the heavens and on

> Earth - are jumelle; in the heavens, unchanging and undecaying; yet on Earth, changeable and decayable.
>
> Theos is the psyche of Aion; Aion that of Kosmos; the heavens that of the Earth. Theos is presenced in perceiveration, with perceiveration presenced in psyche, and psyche in substance, with all of this through Aion, with the whole body, in which are all the bodies, replete with psyche with psyche replete with perceiveration and with theos. Above in the heavens the identity is unchanged while on Earth there is changement coming-into-being
>
> Aion maintains this, through necessitas or through foreseeing or through physis, or through whatever other assumption we assume, for all this is the activity of theos. For the activity of theos is an unsurpassable crafting that no one can liken to anything mortal or divine [...]
>
> Observe also the septenary cosmos ordered in arrangement by Aion with its separate aeonic orbits. Everything replete with phaos but with no Fire anywhere. For fellowship, and the melding of opposites and the dissimilar, produced phaos shining forth in the activity of theos, progenitor of all that is honourable, archon and hegemon of the septenary cosmos." [15]

The essence of which, beyond mythoi, is (i) that our physis is both "male-and-female since of a male-and-female father" and (ii) that the numinous can be apprehended, presenced, by and through "the noble, the beautiful, good fortune, arête and Aion," with Aion understood as the eikon (εἰκὼν) of the Kosmos [16] and - qv. Tractate XI, 2-4 - the cause of changement coming-into-being on Earth and thus of what is changeable and decayable and thus dies.

Which changement coming-into-being, and its change and eventual decay applies, in the perspective of Aeons - of millennia - to denotata and what existents, such as ideologies and organized hierarchical religions, denotata has brought-into-being.

° Empathy is underdeveloped because it seems that for millennia we mortals - or more specifically, perhaps a majority of the males of our species - have neglected the reality of our physis being jumelle: both male-and-female, both masculous and muliebral, with such muliebral physis the geneture of empathy. [18] As described in terms of Greek mythoi and the hermetic tradition in the Pœmandres Tractate in relation to the seven spheres:

> "Those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Æther, the pnuema, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceiveration; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion.
>
> Now listen to the rest of the explanation you asked to hear. When the cycle was fulfilled, the connexions between all things were, by the deliberations of theos, unfastened. Living beings - all male-and-female then - were, including humans, rent asunder thus bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral. Directly, then, theos spoke a numinous logos: propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning, all you creations and artisements, and let the perceiver have the knowledge of being deathless and of Eros as responsible for death.
>
> Having so spoken, foreknowing - through wyrd and that harmonious structure - produced the coagulations and founded the generations with all beings spawning according to their kind. And they of self-knowledge attained a particular benefit while they who, misled by Eros, love the body, roamed around in the dark, to thus, perceptively, be afflicted by death." [19]

The masculous is evident in patriarchy, in patriarchal religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam; in denotata, in dialectical confrontation including Plato's ἔλεγχος, as well as evident in the desire, the masculous need, for competition and for armed and personal conflict. The muliebral is evident in personal virtues such as honour, benignitas, empathy, and wordless personal methodologies such as the epistêmê that is mystical contemplation.

The neglect of empathy is understandable since the masculous - as manifest for example in patriarchy, patriarchal religions, and denotata, codified as denotata has been in the ἰδέα and ideal of Empires and nation-States - has dominated mortal life for millennia to the detriment of the muliebral.

The Uncertitude Of Knowing

Empathy, with its personal horizon, is or can be the geniture of our Uncertitude Of Knowing as human beings, while the masculous is the geniture of that certitude of individual knowing that infuses codified denotata such as ideologies and organized hierarchical religions.

Thus, in terms of numinosity, empathy presents or can present to us in the immediacy of the personal moment an individual intimation or wordless knowing of the numinous, which intimation or knowing places our mortal life, and all we connect with it or is connected to it, into a supra-personal perspective which is a-causal and of Being itself, the source of beings and all being; of which Being we as a mortal are one finite deathful emanation. Which perspective brings with it or can bring with it the wordless knowing of the unwisdom of words.

Thus, while some mythoi Greek or otherwise, some mystical traditions ancient or otherwise, some poetry and some metaphysical speculations Greek or otherwise, can or may provide some insights into our physis, their wordfull expression or expressions are subject or have been subjected to exegesis, just as written expressions of religious-type revelations always are; with such exegesis more often than not the geniture of a certitude or certitudes of knowing.

Which returns us to the personal wordless knowing of empathy and its discoverable embedded uncertitude of knowing, with personal virtues such as honour and benignitas one means - an ancient epistêmê - to try to live according to such a wordless knowing, with personal honour a melding, a hermetic ἐναντιοδρομία, of masculous and muliebral thus returning us to the physis that was cleaved asunder and which in others is still being cleaved asunder.

According to an ancient saying attributed to Heraclitus which may contain a fallible intimation of this and possibly was one of first written intimations of it:

> πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα (Diogenes Laërtius, ix. 7)
>
> All by geniture is appropriately apportioned with beings bound together again by enantiodromia.

David Myatt
17.iii.22
v.3

°°°

[1] https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2018/01/04/from-mythoi-to-empathy

[2] The terms ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος refer to Plato's postulation of what has been termed 'forms' - of a type of metaphysical existent such as an 'idea' - with ἰδέᾳ used for both singular and plural instances, and εἶδος (singular) often used by Plato instead, as for instance at Phaedo 103ε, ὥστε μὴ μόνον αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ἀξιοῦσθαι τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὀνόματος εἰς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον.

In regard to the use of εἶδος and the postulation, cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, 1078β, 14-15, συνέβη δ᾽ ἡ περὶ τῶν εἰδῶν δόξα τοῖς εἰποῦσι διὰ τὸ πεισθῆναι περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῖς Ἡρακλειτείοις λόγοις ὡς πάντων τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀεὶ ῥεόντων', ὥστ᾽ εἴπερ ἐπιστήμη τινὸς ἔσται καὶ φρόνησις, ἑτέρας δεῖν τινὰς φύσεις εἶναι παρὰ τὰς αἰσθητὰς μενούσας: οὐ γὰρ εἶναι τῶν ῥεόντων ἐπιστήμην.

[3] Fragment 1, Diels-Krantz.

[4] A short commentary on my translation is available at https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/heraclitus-fragment-1/

[5] Fragment B80.

[6] I have transliterated πόλεμος, and left δίκη as δίκη because both πόλεμος and δίκη should be regarded, like ψυχή (psyche/Psyche) as terms or as principles in their own right (hence the capitalization), and thus imply, suggest, and require, interpretation and explanation. To render them blandly by English terms such as 'war' and 'justice' – which have their own now particular meaning(s) – is in my view erroneous and somewhat lackadaisical, since δίκη for instance could be, depending on context: the custom(s) of a folk, judgement (or Judgement personified), the natural and the necessary balance, the correct/customary/ancestral way, and so on.

[7] Diels-Kranz, 12A9, B1

[8] In respect of χρόνος, it is not here a modern abstract measurable 'time' but 'the passing' of living or events as evident in the Agamemnon:

> ποίου χρόνου δὲ καὶ πεπόρθηται πόλις 278
>
> Then - how long has it been since the citadel was ravaged?
>
> τίς δὲ πλὴν θεῶν ἅπαντ᾽ ἀπήμων τὸν δι᾽ αἰῶνος χρόνον 554-5
>
> Who - except for the gods - passes their entire life without any injury at all?

In respect of ἀδικία, here it simply implies unbalance in contrast to the balance that is δίκη. The translation 'disorder' - like 'order' for δίκη - is too redolent of some modern or ancient morality designed to manifest 'order' in contrast to its dialectical opposite 'disorder'.

[9] Protagoras, 339δ

[10] Relevant quotations from Simonides are at 339β, 339ξ and the poem by Simonides that Plato preserved is, in the version by J. Aars, Das Gedicht des Simonides in Platons Protagoras, 1888,

> Ἄνδρ᾽ ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι χαλεπόν,
> χερσίν τε καὶ ποσὶ καὶ νόῳ τετράγωνον, ἄνευ ψόγου τετυγμένον.
> <...>
> οὐδέ μοι ἐμμελέως τὸ Πιττάκειον νέμεται,
> καίτοι σοφοῦ παρὰ φωτὸς εἰρημένον: χαλεπὸν φάτ᾽ ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι.
> θεὸς ἂν μόνος τοῦτ᾽ ἔχοι γέρας: ἄνδρα δ᾽ οὐκ ἔστι μὴ οὐ κακὸν ἔμμεναι,
> ὃν ἀμήχανος συμφορὰ καθέλῃ.
> πράξας μὲν εὖ πᾶς ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός,
> κακὸς δ᾽ εἰ κακῶς <τις>,
> καὶ τὸ πλεῖστον ἄριστοι, τούς κε θεοὶ φιλῶσιν.
> τοὔνεκεν οὔ ποτ᾽ ἐγὼ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι δυνατὸν
> διζήμενος κενεὰν ἐς ἄπρακτον ἐλπίδα μοῖραν αἰῶνος βαλέω,
> πανάμωμον ἄνθρωπον, εὐρυεδοῦς ὅσοι καρπὸν αἰνύμεθα χθονός:
> ἐπὶ δ᾽ ὔμμιν εὑρὼν ἀπαγγελέω.
> πάντας δ᾽ ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω,
> ἑκὼν ὅστις ἔρδῃ
> μηδὲν αἰσχρόν: ἀνάγκῃ δ᾽ οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται.
> <...>
> <οὔκ εἰμ᾽ ἐγὼ φιλόμωμος> ἐξαρκεῖ γ᾽ ἐμοί,
> ὃς ἂν ᾖ κακὸς μηδ᾽ ἄγαν ἀπάλαμνος, εἰδώς γ᾽ ὀνησίπολιν δίκαν,
> ὑγιὴς ἀνήρ, οὐδὲ μή μιν ἐγὼ
> μωμήσομαι: τῶν γὰρ ἠλιθίων
> ἀπείρων γενέθλα:
> πάντα τοι καλά, τοῖσί τ᾽ αἰσχρὰ μὴ μέμικται.

The more recent arrangement and reconstruction cited as PMG 242 is somewhat different:

> ἄνδρ᾽ ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι
> χαλεπόν χερσίν τε καὶ ποσὶ καὶ νόῳ
> τετράγωνον, ἄνευ ψόγου τετυγμένον·
> <..>
> οὐδέ μοι ἐμμελέως τὸ Πιττάκειον
> νέμεται, καίτοι σοφοῦ παρὰ φωτὸς εἰ-
> ρημένον· χαλεπὸν φάτ᾽ ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι.
> θεὸς ἂν μόνος τοῦτ᾽ ἔχοι γέρας, ἄνδρα δ᾽ οὐκ
>
> ἔστι μὴ οὐ κακὸν ἔμμεναι,
> ὃν ἂν ἀμήχανος συμφορὰ καθέλῃ·
> πράξας μὲν γὰρ εὖ πᾶς ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός,
> κακὸς δ᾽ εἰ κακῶς [
> [ἐπὶ πλεῖστον δὲ καὶ ἄριστοί εἰσιν
> [οὓς ἂν οἱ θεοὶ φιλῶσιν.]
>
> τοὔνεκεν οὔ ποτ᾽ ἐγὼ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι
> δυνατὸν διζήμενος κενεὰν ἐς ἄ-
> πρακτον ἐλπίδα μοῖραν αἰῶνος βαλέω,
> πανάμωμον ἄνθρωπον, εὐρυεδοῦς ὅσοι
> καρπὸν αἰνύμεθα χθονός·
> ἐπί θ᾽ ὑμῖν εὑρὼν ἀπαγγελέω.
> πάντας δ᾽ ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω,
> ἑκὼν ὅστις ἔρδῃ
> μηδὲν αἰσχρόν: ἀνάγκαι
> δ᾽ οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται.
> <...>
> [οὐκ εἰμὶ φιλόψογος, ἐπεὶ ἔμοιγ᾽ ἐξαρκεῖ
> ὃς ἂν μὴ κακὸς ᾖ] μηδ᾽ ἄγαν ἀπάλαμνος, εἰ-
> δώς γ᾽ ὀνησίπολιν δίκαν,
> ὑγιὴς ἀνήρ: οὔ †μὴν† ἐγὼ
> μωμήσομαι· τῶν γὰρ ἠλιθίων
> ἀπείρων γενέθλα.
> πάντα τοι καλά, τοῖσίν
> τ᾽ αἰσχρὰ μὴ μέμεικται
>
> DL Page, Poetae Melici Graeci, Cambridge University Press, 1962

Such a reconstruction introduces the question of exegesis of not only texts but of such elements as grammar and how the personal revealing that is the wordless-knowing of empathy compares to the supra-personal wordful revealing that

can be or has been deduced from written texts, spoken words or methods such as Plato's ἔλεγχος.

[11] Socrates, in Protagoras, does not associate ἀληθής with ἀγαθός but with χαλεπός, which again introduces the question as to whether ἔλεγχος is a guide to the revealing that is ἀλήθεια and thus to understanding our φύσις as human beings.

[12] In respect of αἴτιος, here the term 'sources' is apt since 'cause' can impose a particular interpretation on the text, as in the causality of 'cause and effect'.

In respect of σοφία, the Latin sapientia is apposite, as in my translation of Tractates I and XIII of the Corpus Hermeticum [*Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. 2017 ISBN 978-1976452369] because in some contexts the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical context given what the English term 'wisdom' now, in common usage and otherwise, often denotes. As in Tractates I and XIII sapientia requires contextual - a philosophical - interpretation.

[13] Regarding my translation:

i) ἐπιστήμη: epistêmê - implying skill or experience, especially in a profession or type of work or in using a methodology - rather than 'science' or 'knowledge', since 'science' has too many modern connotations while 'knowledge' is somewhat vague. In respect of experience in general, qv. Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus, 1115: τῇ δ᾽ ἐπιστήμῃ σύ μου προύχοις τάχ᾽ ἄν που, "about this, your experience has the advantage over mine".

ii) ἀοιδός: songsters, not poets, qv. Hesiod, Theogony, 95 where it is associated with the Muses and Apollo:

> ἐκ γάρ τοι Μουσέων καὶ ἑκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
> 95ἄνδρες ἀοιδοὶ ἔασιν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κιθαρισταί,

iii) [epistêmê] is implied from the previous ἄνδρα δ᾽ οὐκ ἄξιον μὴ οὐ ζητεῖν τὴν καθ᾽ αὐτὸν ἐπιστήμην.

iv) Honourable is an accepted translation of τίμιος, with the English word honour dating from around 1200 and derived from the Latin honorem (refined, grace, beauty) via the Old French (and thence Anglo-Norman) onor/onur. An early use of the term occurs in a poem in Middle English by John Gower dating from c. 1393 which references the Greek warrior Achilles:

> And riht in such a maner wise
> Sche bad thei scholde hire don servise,
> So that Achilles underfongeth
> As to a yong ladi belongeth
> Honour, servise and reverence.
>
> Confessio Amantis. Liber Quintus vv. 2997-3001 (The Works of John Gower. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1901, edited by G.C Macaulay)

[14] Tractate I, 15-16. From my commentary on that tractate:

> *jumelle*. For διπλοῦς. The much underused and descriptive English word jumelle - from the Latin gemellus - describes some-thing made in, or composed of, two parts, and is therefore most suitable here [...]
>
> *deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal*. θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. Here, in respect of my choice of English words, I must admit to being influenced by Chapman's lovely poetic translation of the Hymn to Venus from the Homeric Hymns:
>
> That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man

In respect of οὐσιώδης, I prefer, given the context, 'inner' - suggestive of 'real' - rather than the conventional 'essential'; although 'vital' is an alternative translation here, suggested by what Eusebius wrote (c.326 CE) about φῶς [phaos] pre-existing even before the cosmic order, with φῶς used by Eusebius to mean Light in the Christian sense:

> τό τε φῶς τὸ προκόσμιον καὶ τὴν πρὸ αἰώνων νοερὰν καὶ οὐσιώδη σοφίαν τόν τε ζῶντα [Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 1, chapter 2]
>
> The Light of the proto-cosmos, the comprehension and vital wisdom existing before the Aeons

wyrd. For ἡ εἱμαρμένη. A much better choice, here, than either 'fate' or 'destiny' given how overused both those words now are and how their interpretation is also now so varied. An overview of how the concept may have been understood in the late Hellenic period (around the time the Hermetica was probably written) is given in the 2nd century CE discourse *De Fato*, attributed to Plutarch, which begins by stating that εἱμαρμένη has been described in two ways, as ἐνέργεια (vigorous activity) and as οὐσία (essence) -

> πρῶτον τοίνυν ἴσθι, ὅτι εἱμαρμένη διχῶς καὶ λέγεται καὶ νοεῖται: ἡ μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἐνέργεια ἡ δ᾽ οὐσία

[...]

a mysterium esoteric. For κεκρυμμένον μυστήριον. The term mysterium - a truth or insight or knowledge about some-thing, which is considered religious and/or metaphysical ('hermetic') and which is unknown/unrevealed to or as yet undiscovered by others, and hence 'mysterious' to them - expresses the meaning of the Greek here (as the word mystery by itself does not). Likewise in respect of esoteric - kept concealed or which is concealed/hidden to most or which is revealed to an individual by someone who already 'knows' what the mysterium in question is.

Hence why I write *a* mysterium here rather than *the* mysterium, and why "a mysterium, esoteric even to this day", is better than the rather bland "the mystery kept hidden until this very day"

[15] Tractate XI, 3-7

[16] In respect of eikon, as I wrote in my commentary on Tractate I (Pœmandres), 32:

The meaning and significance of [εἰκὼν] are often overlooked and often lost in translation. I have transliterated εἰκὼν as here it does not only mean what the English words 'image' or 'likeness' suggest or imply, but rather it is similar to what Maximus of Constantinople in his *Mystagogia* [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence.

According to the hermetic weltanschauung, as outlined by Pœmandres here, all physis - the being, nature, character, of beings - their essence beyond the form/appearance their being is or assumes or is perceived as - re-presents (manifests, is an eikon of) theos. That is, the physis of beings can be considered not only as an emanation of theos but as re-presenting his Being, his essence. To recognize this, to recognize theos, to be in communion with theos, to return to theos, and thus become immortal, there is the way up (anados) through the seven spheres."

[17] The masculous and the muliebral are outlined in my 2019 essay *Physis And Being: An Introduction To The Philosophy Of Pathei-Mathos*, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/collected-works-2/physis-and-being/.

[18] The unusual English word geniture expresses the essence of γένεσις: that which or those whom have or derive their being (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else. It also avoids comparisons with the Biblical use of the English 'genesis'.

[19] Tractate I, 18-19.

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A Note Concerning θειότης

The Greek term θειότης occurs in tractate XI (section 11) of the Corpus Hermeticum – θειότητα μίαν – where I translated the term as "divinity-presenced." [1]

Plutarch, in De Pythiae Oraculis – qv. 407a, 398a-f – uses the word in relation to the oracle at Delphi with divinity-presenced also a suitable translation there.

The context of θειότης in tractate XI is:

> καὶ ὅτι μὲν ἔστι τις ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα δῆλον· ὅτι δὲ καὶ εἷς, φανερώτατον· καὶ γὰρ μία ψυχὴ καὶ μία ζωὴ καὶ μία ὕλη. τίς δὲ οὗτος; τίς δὲ ἂν ἄλλος εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός; τίνι γὰρ ἄλλωι ἂν καὶ πρέποι ζῶια ἔμψυχα ποιεῖν, εἰ μὴ μόνωι τῶι θεῶι; εἷς οὖν θεός. †γελοιότατον†· καὶ τὸν μὲν κόσμον ὡμολόγησας ἀεὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἕνα καὶ τὴν σελήνην μίαν καὶ θειότητα μίαν, αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν θεὸν πόστον εἶναι θέλεις [2]
>
> It is evident someone is so creating and that he is One; for Psyche is one, Life is one, Substance is one.
>
> But who is it?
>
> Who could it be if not One, the theos? To whom if not to theos alone would it belong to presence life in living beings?
>
> Theos therefore is One, for having accepted the Kosmos is one, the Sun is one, the Moon is one, and divinity-presenced is one, could you maintain that theos is some other number?

The "one" referred to in tractate XI is most probably the μονάς, Monas (Monad) as in tractate IV. As I noted in my Introduction to that tractate [1], John Dee used the term monas in his *Testamentum Johannis Dee Philosophi summi ad Johannem Gwynn, transmissum 1568*, a text included in Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, published in 1652.

An interesting part of tractate IV is:

> μονὰς οὖσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἑτέρου ἀριθμοῦ.
>
> The Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos without itself being enfolded by any, begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any.

In respect of arithmos, ἀριθμὸς, as I noted in my commentary on tractate IV:10 and on XII:15, [1] the usual translation is 'number' but which translation is, in those instances in the Corpus Hermeticum, somewhat inappropriate and unhelpful.

Similar to – but conveying a different meaning to – θειότης is the Greek term θεότης. Different, because θειότης relates to θεῖος (divine, divinity), and θεότης to θεός (theos, the god).

The word θειότης also occurs – and only once – in the New Testament, in Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, 1.20, where it led to some theological discussions regarding how and *in what* God is manifest, since some commentators apparently mistakenly equated θειότης with θεότης. The Latin of Jerome is:

> invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur sempiterna quoque eius virtus et divinitas

which translates the Greek θειότης by the Latin *divinitas*, a word used by Cicero.

The Greek text of Romans, 1.20, as in NA28, [3] is:

> τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἥ τε ἀΐδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης

The Wycliffe translation:

> For the invisible things of him, that be understood, be beheld of the creature of the world, by those things that be made, yea, and the everlasting virtue of him and the Godhead.

King James Bible:

> For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead

Douay-Rheims, Catholic Bible:

> For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity

In contradistinction to such translations, were I to temerariously venture my own 'interpretation of meaning' of the Greek – that is, my non-literal translation – it would be along the following lines:

> Through the foundation of the Kosmos, those unseen beings of that Being were visible, apprehensible by the beings which that Being produced, as also the sempiternal influence of that Being, and divinity-presenced.

In which interpretation I have endeavoured to express the metaphysical – the ontological – meaning, and have taken αὐτοῦ – literally, "of him/his" – as "of that Being" thus avoiding "gender bias", qv. the appendix – *Concerning Personal Pronouns* – to my commentary on tractate VI. [1] Also, δύναμις is – at least in my fallible opinion – more subtle than the strident "might" or "power" translations impute, suggesting instead "influence" as in tractate III:1, where it interestingly occurs in relation to θεῖος:

> δυνάμει θείαι ὄντα ἐν χάει, by the influence of the numen

My translation of tractate III:1 is as follows:

> The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis. The origin of what exists is theos, who is Perceiveration and Physis and Substance: the sapientia which is a revealing of all beings. For the numinal is the origin: physis, vigour, incumbency, accomplishment, renewance. In the Abyss, an unmeasurable darkness, and, by the influence of the numen, Water and delicate apprehending Pnuema, there, in Kaos. Then, a numinous phaos arose and, from beneath the sandy ground, Parsements coagulated from fluidic essence. And all of the deities <particularize> seedful physis.
>
> Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῖον καὶ φύσις θεία. ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων ὁ θεός, καὶ νοῦς καὶ φύσις καὶ ὕλη, σοφία εἰς δεῖξιν ἀπάντων ὤν· ἀρχὴ τὸ θεῖον καὶ φύσις καὶ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἀνάγκη καὶ τέλος καὶ ἀνανέωσις. ἦν γὰρ σκότος ἄπειρον ἐν ἀβύσσωι καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ πνεῦμα λεπτὸν νοερόν, δυνάμει θείαι ὄντα ἐν χάει. ἀνείθη δὴ φῶς ἅγιον καὶ ἐπάγη †ὑφ' ἅμμωι† ἐξ ὑγρᾶς οὐσίας στοιχεῖα καὶ θεοὶ πάντες †καταδιερῶσι† φύσεως ἐνσπόρου.

Which, for me at least, seems to place the use of θειότης in Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* into the correct Hellenic – Greco-Roman – metaphysical context.

David Myatt
28.iii.18

This article is a revised version of part of a personal reply sent to a life-long friend in answer to a specific question.

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[1] D. Myatt. *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. Translations And Commentaries. CreateSpace. 2017. ISBN 978-1976452369.

[2] The Greek text is from A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Paris, 1972.

[3] Nestle-Aland. *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th revised edition. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart. 2012.

Greek Bible text from: Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th revised edition, Edited by Barbara Aland and others, copyright 2012 Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart.

Corpus Hermeticum

Eight Tractates

I, III, IV, VI, VIII, XI, XII, XIII

Translation and Commentary

David Myatt

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Preface

This work collects together my translations of and commentaries on the eight tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum which were published separately between 2013 and 2017. From the fourteen Greek tractates that have been traditionally referred to as the Corpus Hermeticum, I chose the eight (the ogdoad) whose texts I considered were the most metaphysical and mystical and thus which can provide an understanding of what came to be termed hermeticism.

In the case of the Corpus Hermeticum, the task of translating ancient Greek into English is complicated by the terminology used in the text. Words such as λόγος, νοῦς, πνεῦμα, δημιουργόν, φῶς, ψυχή (καὶ τὰ λοιπά), all require careful consideration if the text is to be understood in relation to the cultural milieu existing at the time of its composition; a milieu where a Hellenistic paganism, of various types and hues, thrived alongside the still relatively new religion of Christianity.

All too often, such Greek words are translated by an English word which has, over centuries, acquired a meaning which is not or which may not be relevant to that milieu, resulting in a 'retrospective reinterpretation' of the text. One thinks here of (i) θεός translated as god or as God, and of λόγος translated as 'word' (or Word) which thus suffuse, or can suffuse, the text with the meanings that nearly two thousand years of Christian exegesis have ascribed to those terms; of (ii) νοῦς translated as either "intellect" or as "mind", neither of which is satisfactory especially given what both of those English words have come to denote, philosophically and otherwise, in the centuries since the Greek tractates were written. In an effort to avoid such retrospective reinterpretation here, and the preconceptions thus imposed upon the text, I have sometimes used transliterations, sometimes used a relatively obscure English word, and sometimes used a new term.

However, given that the goal of the translator is to provide for the general reader an intelligible interpretation of the text, to utilize transliterations for every problematic word would fail to accomplish that goal. Which is why the translator has to use their judgement and why every translation is 'a fallible interpretation of meaning'.

The methodology of using some transliterations, some relatively obscure

English words, and some new term or expression (such as noetic sapientia) results in a certain technical - an 'esoteric' - vocabulary which requires or may require contextual, usually metaphysical, interpretation. Often, the interpretation is provided by reference to the matters discussed in the particular tractate; sometimes by reference to other tractates; and sometimes by considering Ancient Greek, and Greco-Roman, philosophy and mysticism. Occasionally, however, the interpretation is to leave some transliteration - such as physis, φύσις - as a basic term of the particular hermetic weltanschauung described in a particular tractate and, as such, as a term which has no satisfactory English equivalent, metaphysical or otherwise, and therefore to assimilate it into the English language. All of which make these translations rather different from other English versions, past and present, with these translations hopefully enabling the reader to approach and to appreciate the hermetic texts sans preconceptions, modern and otherwise, and thus provide an intimation of how such texts might have been understood by those who read them, or heard them read, in the milieu of their composition.

One of the intentions of these translations of mine of various tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum is provide an alternative approach to such ancient texts and hopefully enable the reader without a knowledge of Greek (and of the minutiae of over a century of scholarly analysis of the Greek text) to appreciate the texts anew and understand why they have - in the original Greek - been regarded as important documents in respect of particular, ancient, weltanschauungen that have, over the centuries, proved most influential and which can still be of interest to those interested in certain metaphysical speculations and certain esoteric matters.

Why an alternative approach to such ancient texts? Because current, and past interpretations - based on using terms such as God, Mind, and Soul - make them appear to be proto-Christian or imbued with an early Christian weltanschauung or express certain philosophical and moralistic abstractions. Also, because I incline toward the view that such texts, in the matter of cosmogony and metaphysics, are more influenced by the classical Greek and the Hellenistic ethos than by any other, and thus in many ways are representative of that ethos as it was being developed, or as it was known, at the time texts such as those in the Corpus Hermeticum were written. An ethos, a cosmogony and a metaphysics, exemplified - to give just a few examples - by terms such as ἀρρενόθηλυς (Poemander), by the shapeshifting of Poemander (τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἠλλάγη τῇ ἰδέᾳ), by mention of a septenary system (Poemander, Tractate XI), by the 'voyages of the psyche' (Tractate XI: 20) and by terms such as Ιερός Λόγος (Tractate III) and which term dates back to the time of Hesiod [1].

In respect, for example, of the Ιερός Λόγος tractate, my view is that it is the story of genesis according to an ancient pagan, and esoteric, weltanschauung; a text in all probability older than the other texts in the Corpus Hermeticum and certainly older, as an aural tradition, than the story given in the Biblical

Genesis; and a text which the author of the Poemandres tractate might well have been familiar with, as a reading of both texts indicates.

As an example of my alternative approach (and perhaps the most controversial example) is my interpretation of ἀγαθός as honour/nobility /honesty, τὸ ἀγαθὸν as the honourable/the noble/nobility, and thus as embodied in noble, trustworthy, honest, individuals, and which interpretation I am inclined to view as an expression of both the classical Greek and the Greco-Roman (Hellenic) ethos, including the ethos of Greco-Roman mysticism, just as the expression τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια, attributed to a certain Roman, is an expression of that ethos; whereas ἀγαθός as some disputable 'abstract', impersonal or philosophical 'good' does not in my view exemplify that ethos and the milieu in which it flourished. Furthermore, given how such a disputable 'abstract', moral, good has been generally understood for the last millennia (partly due to the influence of Christianity, partly due to post-Renaissance philosophy, and partly due to Western jurisprudence) then it seems desirable to avoid using the term 'good' in translations of such ancient texts - as also elsewhere, in other metaphysical tractates of the Hellenic era - since 'good' now has certain post-Hellenic connotations which can distance us from what such ancient tractates may well have expressed. [2]

In respect of the texts, I incline toward the view that they generally represent the personal weltanschauung of their authors germane to their time. That is, that rather than being representative of some axiomatical pre-existing philosophy or of some religious school of thought, they reproduce the insight and the understanding of individuals regarding particular metaphysical matters; an insight and an understanding no doubt somewhat redolent of, and influenced by, and sometimes perhaps paraphrasing, some such existing philosophies and/or some such schools of thought; and an insight which often differs from tractate to tractate.

Regarding my translation, some may well consider the words of Diogenes Laertius - *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 3.1 (64) - in relation to Plato, quite apposite:

> χρῆται δὲ ὁ Πλάτων ἐνίοτε αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κακοῦ: ἔστι δ᾽ ὅτε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μικροῦ. πολλάκις δὲ καὶ διαφέρουσιν ὀνόμασιν ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σημαινομένου χρῆται.

For I have sometimes translated the same Greek word in two different ways in order to try and elucidate the meaning of the text [exempli gratia: ἀπεριόριστον, as undefinable and unmeasurable] just as I have idiosyncratically translated certain Greek words [exempli gratia: ἅγιος, as numinous], differences and idiosyncrasies I have endeavoured to explain in my commentary.

The Greek text used is that of A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus*

Hermeticum, Third Edition, 1972. Occasionally I have followed the reading of the MSS or the emendations of others rather than Nock's text with such variations noted in my commentary. Text enclosed in angled brackets < > indicates a conjectural editorial addition, and <...> indicates a lacuna.

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[1] a) ἔστι λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ ἱρὸς λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 48, s3. (b) ἔστι ἱρὸς περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 62, s2. (c) ἔστι δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν ἱρὸς λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 81, s2.

[2] I have endeavoured to explain such interpretations in various essays, including (i) *Some Examples Regarding Translation and Questions of Interpretation,* (ii) *Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum*; and (iii) *Cicero On Summum Bonum*.

Ποιμάνδρης

Pœmandres

Tractate I

Introduction

The Greek text of the tractate often referred to as the Pœmandres/Pymander part of the Corpus Hermeticum was first published by Turnebus in Paris in 1554 and of the origin of the knowledge expounded in the text, the author declares at v.2 that

> εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμάνδρης ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς οἶδα ὃ βούλει καὶ σύνειμί σοι πανταχοῦ

Which implies - qv. my translation, and notes and commentary on the text - that what Pœmandres is about to reveal is an authentic perceiveration, and this supernatural being [or archetype] knows what is desired/wanted because, like the guardian daemons of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is close by.

What is revealed is a summary of that weltanschauung that has been termed hermetic philosophy; a summary widely regarded as an important hermetic text and as dating from the second or the third century CE; and a summary which contains many interesting notions and allusions, such as logos, physis/Physis, the septenary system, the gospel of John, the feminine character of Physis/Nature, the doxology Agios o Theos, and θεός as being both male and female in one person - that is, either *ἀνδρόγυνος* or (more controversially) bisexual.

°°°

Translation

[1] Once, while concentrating on and pondering what is real, my intuitions freely flowed, and, my alertness dulled as from an excess of wearisome bodily toil or too much eating, it seemed as if a huge being - too large to measure -

chanced by calling out my name and asking what it was I wanted to see and hear about and learn and have knowledge of.

[2] Who are you, I asked.

I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority, knowing your desires and eachwhere with you.

[3] I answered that I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings, and to have knowledge of theos. That is what I want to hear.

So he said to me, remember all those things you wanted to learn, for I shall instruct you.

[4] So saying, his form altered whereupon I at once sensed everything; an indefinity of inner sight, with everything suffused in phaos - bright and clear - so that from this seeing, a desire. But all too soon there came down upon it a heavy darkness - stygian, strange - and slithering <as a serpent> until that darkness changed in physis: flowing, of an untellable disorder, with smoke as from a fire and an indescribable sound followed by some aphonous noise as if phaos was calling out.

[5] And then, from the phaos, a numinous logos came upon that physis with pure Fire going forth to the height of that physis; easily and effective and efficient. Since Air is agile, it followed the pnuema, up and above Earth and Water and as far as Fire, to be as if it were hanging from that, there.

Earth and Water remained, coagulating together such that <Earth> could not be seen apart from Water until they were stirred by the sound of the pneumal logos that came down upon them.

[6] Pœmandres asked, had I apprehended the sense of that inner seeing? And I said I shall have knowledge of it.

I am, he said, that phaos; perceiveration, your theos, and prior to the flowing physis brought forth from darkness. [And] the phaomal logos, from perceiveration, is the child of theos.

So I said for him to continue.

Then know that within you - who hears and sees - is logos kyrios, although perceiveration is theos the father. They are not separated, one from the other, because their union is Life.

Thank you, I said.

Then discover phaos and become familiar with it.

[7] So saying, he stared at me for so long a duration that I shivered because of the way he looked. But, as he tilted his head back, I, observing, discovered the phaos of unmeasurable forces and an undefinable cosmic order coming-into-being. While the fire, embraced by a strong force, was subdued and kept in stasis.

Such I observed and discovered because of those words of Pœmandres. But, since I was vexed, he spoke to me again. From your seeing, an awareness of the quidditas of semblance; of the primal before the origin without an end.

This was what Pœmandres said to me, then.

[8] So I asked from what place, then, the parsements of physis?

To which he answered, from the deliberations of theos, who, having comprehended the logos and having seen the beauty of the cosmic order, re-presented it, and so became a cosmic order from their own parsements and by the birth of Psyche.

[9] Theos, the perceiveration, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiveration, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate.

[10] Directly, from the downward parsements, the logos of theos bounded to the fine artisements of Physis and joined with the perceiveration of that artisan, for it was of the same essence. Thus the descending parsements of Physis were left, devoid of logos, to be only substance.

[11] The perceiveration of that artisan, in combination with logos, surrounded the spheres, spinning them around, a twizzling of artisements of some indefinite origin and some undeterminable end, finishing where they began. Turning around and around as perceiveration decreed, the spheres produced, from those descending parsements, beings devoid of logos, for they were not given logos, while Air produced what flew, and Water what swam. Divided, one from the other, were Earth and Water, as perceiveration had decreed, with Earth delivering from within herself beings four-footed and crawling, and animals savage and benign.

[12] Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all, brought forth in his own likeness a most beautiful mortal who, being his child, he loved. And theos, who loved his own image, bequeathed to him all his works of Art.

[13] Thus, having discovered what that artisan with that father's assistance had wrought, he too determined on such artisements, which the father agreed to. Ingressing to the artisan's realm, with full authority, he appreciated his

brother's artisements, and they - loving him - each shared with him their own function.

Having fully learned their essence, and having partaken of their physis, he was determined to burst out past the limit of those spheres to discover the one who imposed their strength upon the Fire.

[14] With full authority over the ordered cosmos of humans and of beings devoid of logos, he burst through the strength of the spheres to thus reveal to those of downward physis the beautiful image of theos.

When she beheld such unceasing beauty - he who possessed all the vigour of the viziers and was the image of theos - she lovingly smiled, for it was as if in that Water she had seen the semblance of that mortal's beautiful image and, on Earth, his shadow. And as he himself beheld in that Water her image, so similar to his own, he desired her and wanted to be with her.
Then, his want and his vigour realized, and he within that image devoid of logos, Physis grasped he whom she loved to entwine herself around him so that, as lovers, they were intimately joined together.

[15] Which is why, distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. Yet, although deathless and possessing full authority, the human is still subject to wyrd. Hence, although over the harmonious structure, when within become the slave. Male-and-female since of a male-and-female father, and wakeful since of a wakeful one. <...>

[16] <...> my perceiveration, for I also love the logos. Then Pœmandres said, this is a mysterium esoteric even to this day. For Physis, having intimately joined with the human, produced a most wondrous wonder possessed of the physis of the harmonious seven I mentioned before, of Fire and pneuma. Physis did not tarry, giving birth to seven male-and-female humans with the physis of those viziers, and ætherean.

Pœmandres, I said, a great eagerness has now arrived in me so that I yearn to hear more. Do not go away.

Then, Pœmandres replied, be silent for this primary explanation is not yet complete.

I shall, I said, therefore, be silent.

[17] To continue, those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Æther, the pnuema, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceiveration; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion.

[18] Now listen to the rest of the explanation you asked to hear. When the cycle was fulfilled, the connexions between all things were, by the deliberations of theos, unfastened. Living beings - all male-and-female then - were, including humans, rent asunder thus bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral. Directly, then, theos spoke a numinous logos: propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning, all you creations and artisements, and let the perceiver have the knowledge of being deathless and of Eros as responsible for death.

[19] Having so spoken, foreknowing - through wyrd and that harmonious structure - produced the coagulations and founded the generations with all beings spawning according to their kind. And they of self-knowledge attained a particular benefit while they who, misled by Eros, love the body, roamed around in the dark, to thus, perceptively, be afflicted by death.

[20] But why, I asked, do the unknowing err so much that they are robbed of immortality.

You seem, he said, not to have understood what you heard, for did I not tell you to discover things?

I said I do recall and am discovering, for which I am obliged.

Then tell me, if you have discovered, why death is expected for those in death.

Because originally the body began with that stygian darkness, from whence the flowing physis which formed the body within the perceptible cosmic order which nourishes death.

[21] Your apprehension is correct. Yet why, according to the logos of theos, does the one of self-discovery progress within themselves?

To which I replied, phaos and Life formed the father of all beings, from whence that human came into being.

You express yourself well. For phaos and Life are the theos and the father from whence the human came into being. Therefore if you learn to be of Life and phaos - and that you perchance are of them - then you progress to return to Life. Thus spoke Pœmandres.

Can you - who are my perceiveration - therefore tell me how I may progress to Life? For does not theos say that the human of perceiveration should have self-knowledge?

[22] And do not all humans posses perceiveration?

Again you express yourself well. I, perceiveration, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

Before they hand over their body to its death they loathe the influencing impressions, for they know their vigour. That is, I - perceiveration - do not allow what the vigour of the body embraces to be achieved. For, as guardian, I close the entrance to the bad and the dishonourably vigorful, preventing their procrastinations.

[23] I keep myself distant from the unreasonable, the rotten, the malicious, the jealous, the greedy, the bloodthirsty, the hubriatic, instead, giving them up to the avenging daemon, who assigns to them the sharpness of fire, who visibly assails them, and who equips them for more lawlessness so that they happen upon even more vengeance. For they cannot control their excessive yearnings, are always in the darkness - which tests them - and thus increase that fire even more.

[24] You, perceiveration, have instructed me well about all those things I saught. But could you tell me how the Anados will occur?

To which Pœmandres replied, first, the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed with the semblance it had disappearing and its now non-functioning ethos handed over to the daimon, with the body's perceptions returning to their origin, then becoming separated with their purpose, transplanted, and with desire and eagerness journeying toward the physis devoid of logos.

[25] Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait.

[26] Thus, stripped of the activities of that structure, they enter into the ogdoadic physis, and, with those there, celebrate the father in song for they, together, rejoice at this arrival who, now akin to them, hears those forces beyond the ogdoadic physis celebrating theos in melodious song. Then, in order, they move toward the father to hand themselves over to those forces, and, becoming those forces, they become united with theos. For to so become of theos is the noble goal of those who seek to acquire knowledge.

Why, therefore, hesitate? Should it not be that, having received all these things,

you should become a guide to those who are suitable so that, because of you, descendants of mortals may - through theos - escape?

[27] Having so spoken to me, Pœmandres joined with those forces, while I, having given thanks to and expressed my gratitude toward the father of all beings, went forth strengthened and informed regarding the physis of everything and with an insight of great importance.

So it was that I began to tell mortals about how beautiful knowledge and an awareness of the numinous were. You earth-bound mortals, you who have embraced intoxicating liquor, sleepfulness, and are unknowing of theos: soberize, stop your drunkenness, for you are beguiled by irrational sleepfulness.

[28] Hearing this, they, with the same purpose, gathered round. And I said, you who are earth-bound, why do you embrace death when you have the means to partake of immortality? Change your ways, you who have accompanied deception and who have kinship with the unknowing ones. Leave the dark phaos, partake of immortality, move away from your destruction.

[29] Then some of them, having ridiculed, went away, embracing as they did the way of death; although some others, desirous of being informed, threw themselves down at my feet. I asked them to stand, and thus became a guide to those of my kind, informing them of the logoi - of the way and the means of rescue - and engendered in them the logoi of sapientia, with the celestial elixir to nurture them.

And with the arrival of evening with the rays of Helios beginning to completely wane, I bid they express their gratitude to theos, after which - with that expression of gratitude completed - they each retired to their own bed.

[30] Commemorating within myself the noble service of Pœmandres - replete with what I had desired - I was most pleased, for the sleep of the body engendered temperance of psyche, the closing of the eyes a genuine insight, with my silence pregnant with the noble, and the expression of the logos breeding nobility.

Such is what transpired for me, received from perceiveration - that is, Pœmandres; for it was by being theos-inspired that I came upon this revealing. Therefore, from my psyche and with all my strength, I offer benedictions to theos, the father.

[31]

> Agios o Theos, father of all beings.
> Agios o Theos, whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts.
> Agios o Theos, whose disposition is to be recognized and who is recognized by his own.

Agios es, you who by logos form all being.
Agios es, you who engender all physis as eikon.
Agios es, you whom the Physis did not morph.
Agios es, you who are mightier than all artifice.
Agios es, you who surpass all excellence.
Agios es, you who transcend all praise.

You - ineffable, inexpressible, to whom silence gives voice - receive these respectful wordful offerings from a psyche and a heart that reach out to you.

[32] I ask of you to grant that I am not foiled in acquiring knowledge germane to our essence; to invigorate me, so that - by that favour - I may bring illumination to the unknowing who, kindred of my kind, are your children.

Such I testify and believe; to advance to Life and phaos. For you, father, a benediction. Your mortal's purpose is to share in your numinosity, for which you have provided every means.

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Notes and Commentary on the Text

The numbers refer to the sections of the Greek text, 1-32.

1.

what is real. Regarding τῶν ὄντων cf. Plato, Republic, Book 7 (532c) - πρὸς δὲ τὰ ἐν ὕδασι φαντάσματα θεῖα καὶ σκιὰς τῶν ὄντων ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ εἰδώλων σκιὰς δι᾽ ἑτέρου τοιούτου φωτὸς ὡς πρὸς ἥλιον κρίνειν ἀποσκιαζομένας - where the φάντασμα (the appearance) of some-thing natural (god-given), such as the σκιὰ (image) that is reflected by water, is stated to be real, and contrasted with what is not considered to be real (what is an unsubstantial image) such as that cast by a fire rather than by the Sun.

intuition. For διανοίας. As with *νοῦς* (see 2. below) a term which deserves some scrutiny. Conventionally, it is translated as 'thought', or 'thinking', as if in reference to some sort of idealized faculty we human beings are said to possess and which faculty deals with ideations and their collocations and is considered as necessary to, or the foundation of, understanding and reason.

More accurately, in a classical context, *διανοίας* is (i) 'intelligence' (or intuition) in the sense of understanding some-thing or someone (i.e. in being able to perceive some-thing correctly or to correctly understand - to know - a person), or (ii) 'intention'.

I have opted for 'intuition' as suggesting, and as manifesting, insight, often from

contemplation, as the etymology, from the Latin *intueri*, suggests. For the English word 'thought' now conveys modern meanings which, in my view, are not relevant here. And an 'intuition' that is related to, but somewhat different from, the perceiveration that is *νοῦς*.

Alertness. αἴσθησις. Alertness here in the sense that the normal, alert, awareness of the physical senses is dulled by interior intuition, insight, or revelation. An appropriate alternative translation would thus be *awareness*, as in awareness of one's surroundings.

Huge. ὑπερμεγέθη - qv Plutarch *Romulus*, 16.5 ἐπὶ στρατοπέδου δρῦν ἔτεμεν ὑπερμεγέθη - chopped down a huge tree there in that encampment.

Huge, and too large to measure by ordinary means. I do not see any need to exaggerate what is implied, as some other translations do.

Have knowledge of. In the tractate, γνῶναι is related to νοῦς and διανοίας as an expression of what is perceived, or one is aware of. Here, of what one discerns in the sense of distinguishing some-thing from something else and thus 'knowing' of and about that thing.

2.

Pœmandres. Ποιμάνδρης. The older interpretation of 'shepherd of men' is unacceptable because speculative; the speculation being that it derives from ποιμήν, which has a variety of meanings other than shepherd, for example, chief, and owner.

A more recent etymology involves some ancient Egyptian term associated with the god Re. However, this etymology, first proposed by Francis Griffith in the 1920's [qv. W. Scott and A. S. Ferguson: *Hermetica: the ancient Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophical teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924-1936] was based on a linguistic and stylistic analysis of Coptic sources dating well over a millennia after the god Re was worshipped in ancient Egypt.

Also, the book *From Poimandres to Jacob Bohme: Hermetism, Gnosis and the Christian Tradition*, edited by Roelof van den Broek and published in 2000 (Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica) which mentions this etymology by Griffiths and which is often cited as confirming this etymology, does not provide further context in the form of extant Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions or references to papyrus fragments from long before the Coptic period, but instead makes various conjectures, as for example in respect of an alternative Coptic form of the genitive n-re, and relies on other linguistic/stylistic analysis of much later texts.

Until a link can be established to such primary Egyptian sources, or to reliable

sources much earlier than such Coptic texts, I remain unconvinced in respect of the ancient Egyptian origins of the name Ποιμάνδρης, and therefore am inclined to leave it as a personal name, transliterated Pœmandres.

perceiveration. νοῦς. The conventional interpretation here is 'mind', as if in contrast to 'the body' and/or as if some fixed philosophical and abstract principle is meant or implied.

This conventional interpretation is in my view incorrect, being another example of not only retrospective reinterpretation but of using a word which has acquired, over the past thousand years or more, certain meanings which detract from an understanding of the original text. Retrospective reinterpretation because the assumption is that what is being described is an axiomatic, reasoned, philosophy centred on ideations such as Thought, Mind, and Logos, rather than what it is: an attempt to describe, in fallible words, a personal intuition about our existence, our human nature, and which intuition is said to emanate from a supernatural being named Pœmandres.

In addition, one should ask what does a translation such as 'I am Poimandres, mind of sovereignty' [*vide* Copenhaver] actually mean? That there is a disembodied 'mind' which calls itself Pœmandres? That this disembodied 'mind' is also some gargantuan supernatural shapeshifting being possessed of the faculty of human speech? That some-thing called 'sovereignty' has a mind?

I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.

Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action. Hence why, in the Oedipus Tyrannus, Sophocles has Creon voice his understanding of the incipient hubris of Oedipus, of his pride without a purpose, of his apparent inability to understand, to correctly perceive, the situation:

> εἴ τοι νομίζεις κτῆμα τὴν αὐθαδίαν
> εἶναί τι τοῦ νοῦ χωρίς, οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονεῖς.
>
> If you believe that what is valuable is pride, by itself,
> Without a purpose, then your judgement is not right.
>
> vv. 549-550

Translating νοῦς as perceiverance/perceiveration thus places it into the correct context, given αὐθεντίας - authority. For "I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority" implies "What [knowledge] I reveal (or am about to reveal) is authentic," so that an alternative translation, in keeping with the hermeticism of the text, would be "I am Pœmandres, the authentic perceiveration." [The English word authentic means 'of authority, authoritative' and is derived, via Latin, from the Greek *αὐθεντία*]

eachwhere. An unusual but expressive (c.15th century) English word, suited to such an esoteric text. The meaning here is that, like a guardian δαίμων of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is always close by: eachwhere with you.

3.

Apprehend. νοέω. To apprehend also in the sense of 'discover'. Again, I have tried to make a subtle distinction here, as there is in the text between the related νοῦς, γνῶναι, and διανοίας.

physis. A transliteration, to suggest something more than what 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denotes. That is, to know what is real and apprehend the physis of those real things - νοῆσαι τὴν τού των φύσιν; to discern the physis, the true nature, of beings. That is, to have an understanding of ontology; for physis is a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being.

γνῶναι τὸν θεόν. To have - to acquire - knowledge of θεός. Does θεός here mean God, a god, a deity, or the god? God, the supreme creator Being, the only real god, the father, as in Christianity? A deity, as in Hellenic and classical paganism? The god, as in an un-named deity - a god - who is above all other deities? Or possibly all of these? And if all, in equal measure, or otherwise?

The discourse of Pœmandres, as recounted in the tractate, suggests two things. First, that all are meant or suggested - for example, Τὸ φῶς ἐκεῖνο, ἔφη, ἐγὼ νοῦς ὁ σὸς θεός could be said of Pœmandres as a god, as a deity, as the god, and also possibly of God, although why God, the Father - as described in the Old and New Testaments - would call Himself Pœmandres, appear in such a vision, and declare what He declares about θεός being both male and female in one person, is interesting. Second, that the knowledge that is revealed is of a source, of a being, that encompasses, and explains, all three, and that it is this knowing of such a source, beyond those three conventional ones, that is the key to 'what is real' and to apprehending 'the physis of beings'.

Hence, it is better to transliterate θεός - or leave it as θεός - than to use god; and a mistake to use God, as some older translations do.

remember all those things you want to learn. Ἔχε νῷ: 'hold the awareness' [be aware] of what you said you wanted to learn - that is, 'remember' them; which is better, and more expressive, than the somewhat colloquial and modern 'keep in mind'.

4.

So saying, his form [ἰδέᾳ] altered. For τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἠλλάγη τῇ ἰδέᾳ. Or - more expressively - 'he shapeshifted'. A common theme in Greek mythology and literature, as in the ancient Hymn to Demeter:

> ὣς εἰποῦσα θεὰ μέγεθος καὶ εἶδος ἄμειψε γῆρας ἀπωσαμένη
>
> Having so spoken, the goddess changed in height and cast off that aged appearance

[An] indefinity of inner sight [inner seeing]. ὁρῶ θέαν ἀόριστον. The sense of ὁράω here is metaphorical, of an interior knowing or apprehension not occasioned by the faculty of sight; the inner knowing, for example, that the blind Tiresias has in respect of Oedipus in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles - his apprehension of what Oedipus has done and what he will do. Such an 'inner seeing' includes the Tiresian kind a prophetic knowing as well as the 'interior visions' of a mystic.

In respect of ἀόριστος, I have opted for indefinity, an unusual [read obscure] English word derived c.1600 from indefinite.

phaos. A transliteration of φῶς - using the the Homeric φάος. Since φάος metaphorically (qv. Iliad, Odyssey, Hesiod, etcetera) implies the being, the life, ‘the spark’, of mortals, and, generally, either (i) the illumination, the light, that arises because of the Sun and distinguishes the day from the night, or (ii) any brightness that provides illumination and thus enables things to be seen, I am inclined to avoid the vague English word 'light' which other translations use, and which English word now implies many things which the Greek does not or may not; as for instance in the matter of over a thousand years of New Testament exegesis, especially in reference to the gospel of John. A transliteration requires the reader to pause and consider what phaos may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply; and hopefully thus conveys something about the original text.

Also, φῶς δὲ πάντα γεγενημένα suggests '[with] everything *suffused in* phaos' and not 'everything *became* light' as if to imply that suddenly everything was transformed into 'light'.

clear and bright. εὔδιόν τε καὶ ἰλαρόν - if one accepts the emendation εὔδιόν [clear] then ἰλαρόν might suggest the metaphorical sense of 'bright' (rather

than the descriptive 'cheery') which fits well with the contrasting and following φοβε ρόν τε καὶ στυγνόν.

Downward. κατωφερὲς - cf. Appian, *The Civil Wars*, Book 4, chapter 13 - κατωφερὲς δ᾽ ἐστὶ τὸ πεδίον.

stygian. For στυγνόν, for stygian is a word which in English imputes the sense of the original Greek, as both its common usage, and its literary usage (by Milton, Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, et al) testify. Some-thing dark, gloomy, disliked, abhorred. One might, for example, write that "that river looks as stygian", and as unforgiving, as the water of Styx - ἀμείλικτον Στυγὸς ὕδωρ.

serpent. ὄφει is one of the emendations of Nock, for the meaning of the text here is difficult to discern. Given what follows - re the smoke and fire - it is tempting to agree with Reitzenstein that what may be meant is a not an ordinary serpent but a dragon, δράκοντι, qv. the Iliad (II, 308) and the seven-headed dragon of Revelation 12, 3-17.

flowing (as in fluidic). The sense of ὑγρός here, since what follows - ἀφάτως τεταραγμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδι δοῦσαν - does not suggest either 'watery' or 'moist'. Cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 314 - ταῦτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐποίουν ὑγρᾶν Νεφελᾶν στρεπταιγλᾶν δάιον ὁρμάν - where clouds are described as flowing and in their flowing-moving obscure the brightness (of the day).

aphonous ... phaos calling out. I follow the MSS which have φωτὸς, which Nock emended to πυρός. While the emendation, given the foregoing mention of fire, makes some sense, it does render what follows, with the mention of φωτὸς, rather disjointed. However, if - as I suggested above - φῶς is not translated as 'light', but, as with physis and λόγος [qv. 5. below], is transliterated, then φωτὸς here is fine, for it is as if "phaos was calling out" in an aphonous - an un-human, animal-like, and thus wordless - way from beneath the covering of darkness that has descended down, and descended with an indescribable noise. And aphonous here because covered - smothered, obscured, muffled - by the indescribably noisy darkness. Which leads directly to the mention of φῶς and λόγος in the next part of the text; that is, to the ascension of φῶς and λόγος.

If one reads πυρός, then the interpretation would be that it is the fire which is calling out in an un-human, animal-like, and thus wordless way.

5.

Logos. λόγος. A transliteration, which as with my other transliterations, requires the reader to pause and reflect upon what the term may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply. The common translation as 'Word' does not express or even suggest all the meanings (possible or suggested) of the Greek, especially as Word - as in Word of God - now imputes so much (in so many different often

doctrinal ways) after two thousand years of Christianity and thus tends to lead to a retrospective re-interpretation of the text.

Numinous. ἅγιος. Numinous is better - more accurate - than 'holy' or 'sacred', since these latter English words have been much overused in connexion with Christianity and are redolent with meanings supplied from over a thousand years of exegesis; meanings which may or may not be relevant here.

Correctly understood, numinous is the unity beyond our perception of its two apparent aspects; aspects expressed by the Greek usage of *ἅγιος* which could be understood in a good (light) way as 'sacred', revered, of astonishing beauty; and in a bad (dark) way as redolent of the gods/wyrd/the fates/morai in these sense of the retributive or (more often) their balancing power/powers and thus giving rise to mortal 'awe' since such a restoration of the natural balance often involved or required the death (and sometimes the 'sacrifice') of mortals. It is the numinous - in its apparent duality, and as a manifestation of a restoration of the natural, divine, balance - which is evident in much of Greek tragedy, from the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus (and the Orestia in general) to the *Antigone* and the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles.

The two apparent aspects of the numinous are wonderfully expressed by Rilke:

> Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel
> Ordnungen? und gesetzt selbst, es nähme
> einer mich plötzlich ans Herz: ich verginge von seinem
> stärkeren Dasein. Denn das Schöne ist nichts
> als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen,
> und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmäht,
> uns zu zerstören. Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.

Who, were I to sigh aloud, of those angelic beings might hear me?
And even if one of them deigned to take me to his heart I would dissolve
Into his very existence.
For beauty is nothing if not the genesis of that numen
Which we can only just survive
And which we so admire because it can so calmly disdain to betake us.
Every angel is numinous

> *wenn ich schrie*. 'Were I to sigh aloud' is far more poetically expressive, and more in tune with the metaphysical tone of the poem and the stress on *schrie*, than the simple, bland, 'if I cried out'. A sighing aloud - not a shout or a scream - of the sometimes involuntary kind sometimes experienced by those engaged in contemplative prayer or in deep, personal, metaphysical musings.
>
> *der Engel Ordnungen*. The poetic emphasis is on Engel, and the usual translation here of 'orders' - or something equally abstract and harsh (such as hierarchies) - does not in my view express the poetic beauty

> (and the almost supernatural sense of strangeness) of the original; hence my suggestion 'angelic beings' - of such a species of beings, so different from we mortals, who by virtue of their numinosity have the ability to both awe us and overpower us.

came upon that physis. Came upon that which had the physis of darkness and then changed to become fluidic.

Fire. A capitalization, since 'fire' here is suggestive of something possibly elemental.

Air. A capitalization, as with Fire; ditto with the following Water and Earth.

A possible alternative here might be to use the Homeric meaning of ἀὴρ - mist - since 'air' is just too general, does not describe what is happening, and thus is confusing.

pnuema. For πνεύματι/πνεῦμα. A transliteration, given that the English alternatives - such as 'spirit' or 'breath' - not only do not always describe what the Greek implies but also suggest things not always or not necessarily in keeping with the Hellenic nature of the text.

This particular transliteration has a long history in English, dating back to 1559 CE. In 1918, DeWitt Burton published a monograph - listing, with quotations, the various senses of πνεῦμα - entitled *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918)

I incline toward the view that πνεῦμα here - like λόγος - does not necessarily imply something theological (in the Christian sense or otherwise) but rather suggests an alternative, more personal, weltanschauung that, being a weltanschauung, is undoctrinal and subtle, and which weltanschauung is redolent of Hellenic culture. Subtle and undoctrinal in the way that early alchemical texts are subtle and undoctrinal and try to express, or hint at (however obscurely to us, now), a weltanschauung, and one which is more paganus than Christian.

coagulating. For συμμεμιγμένα, which suggests something more elemental - more actively joined - than just 'mixed or mingled' together.

pneumal logos. πνευματικὸν λόγον. The term *pneumal logos* is interesting and intended to be suggestive and thus open to and requiring interpretation. In contrast, the usual translation is verbo spirituali (spiritual word), as if what is meant or implied is some-thing theological and clearly distinct from the corporeal, as Thomas Aquinas wrote in *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*: Ex quo patet quod nomen verbi magis proprie dicitur de verbo spirituali quam de

corporali. Sed omne illud quod magis proprie invenitur in spiritualibus quam in corporalibus, propriissime Deo competit. Ergo verbum propriissime in Deo dicitur. (*De veritate, q. 4a. 1s. c2).*

6.

apprehended the sense of that inner seeing. Given what follows, the English word 'sense' is perhaps appropriate here, rather than the inflexible word 'meaning'.

phaomal logos. φωτεινὸς λόγος. As with *pneumal logos*, this is suggestive, and open to interpretation.

child of theos. υἱὸς θεοῦ. The scriptural sense - 'son of god', for example Mark 15.39, Ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν - is usually assumed; a sense which follows the general usage of υἱὸς (son) as in Homer et al. But the later (c.2nd/3rd century CE) usage 'child' is possible here, a usage known from some papyri (qv. *Papiri Greci e Latini*, edited by Girolamo Vitelli). This also has the advantage of being gender neutral, for which see the note under ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in section 19.

logos kyrios. λόγος κυρίου (cf. pneumal logos and phaomal logos). Invariably translated as 'word of the lord', echoing the formula found in LXX (qv. for example Jeremiah 1.4 ἐγένετο λόγος κυρίου πρός με) although, as attested by many papyri, kyrios was also used in the Hellenic world as an epithet both of a deity and of a powerful potentate [hence 'logos kyrios' rather than 'kyrios logos'] implying respect and an acknowledgement of their authority and power.

7.

duration. For reasons I outlined in the *The Art of Translation, and A Question About Time* section of Appendix I, I prefer to translate χρόνος as duration (or something akin) and not as 'time'. Briefly explained, the English word 'time' now denotes what the term χρόνος did not.

tilted his head back. Perhaps suggestive of looking up toward the heavens, qv. the c. 2nd century CE writer Achilles Tatius (writing around the time the Corpus Hermeticum was written) who, in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Book V, 3.3, wrote - ἀνανεύσας εἰς οὐρανὸν ‘ὦ Ζεῦ, τί τοῦτο’ ἔφην ‘φαίνεις ἡμῖν τέρας

unmeasurable. ἀπεριόριστον - beyond being countable, impossible to be counted; from ἀριθμητός - countable.

cosmic order. κόσμος. The word 'cosmos' by itself is probably insufficient here, for the Greek term κόσμος carries with it the suggestion that the cosmos is an ordered structure, an order evident in the observed regularity of heavenly bodies such as the moon, the constellations, and the planets.

undefinable. ἀπεριόριστον: A slightly different sense here to previously, and an interesting contrast with εὐπεριόριστον - well-defined - as used by Strabo when describing the process of measuring and defining, in geographical terms, a region of the Earth:

> τὸ γὰρ σημειῶδες καὶ τὸ εὐπεριόριστον ἐκεῖθεν λαβεῖν ἔστιν, οὗ χρείαν ἔχει ὁ γεωγράφος: εὐπεριόριστον δέ, ὅταν ἢ ποταμοῖς ἢ ὄρεσιν ἢ θαλάττῃ δυνατὸν ᾖ (*Geography*, 2.1.30)

coming-into-being. γεγενημένον. The meaning here is somewhat obscure. Is what is described a discovery of how the already existing and known cosmic order *came* into being, or the apprehension of a - or some sort of - cosmic order coming-into-being? Or does γεγενημένον refer to phaos?

8.

quidditas of semblance. ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος. The transliteration 'archetype' here is, unfortunately, unsuitable, given what the term archetype now suggests and implies (vide Jungian psychology, for example) beyond what the Greek of the text means. Appropriate words or terms such as 'primal-pattern' or 'protoform' are awkward, clumsy. Hence quidditas (11th/12th century Latin), from whence came 'quiddity', a term originally from medieval scholasticism which was then used to mean the natural (primal) nature or form of some-thing, and thus hints at the original sense of ἀρχέτυπον. As used here, quidditas means exactly what ἀρχέτυπον does in the text, sans Jungian psychology; sans modern 'popular psychology'; sans expositions of hermetic/gnostic philosophy (or what is assumed to be a hermetic/gnostic philosophy) and sans expositions of Plato's philosophy.

The whole passage - τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος, τὸ προάρχον τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς ἀπεράντου - is concerned with various shades of ἀρχή, and is rather obscure. ἀρχή as the origin - 'the beginning' - of beings and thus of their εἶδος (the ἀρχέτυπον), of their semblance, their type; and ἀρχή - the primal before (προάρχον) that beginning, of beings - as that origin (that beginning) which has no end, no known limits, ἀπεράντου.

parsements. For στοιχεῖον, and thus avoiding the word 'elements' whose meanings, being now many and varied, somewhat detract from the meaning of the text. By a parsement - an unusual variant of partiment (from the Latin partimentum) - is meant the fundamental (the basic, elemental, primal) components or principles of 'things' as understood or as posited in Hellenic times; and whether or not these are undescribed or described in terms of a particular philosophy or weltanschauung (for example, as Air, Fire, and so on).

deliberations of theos. βουλῆς θεοῦ. 'Deliberations' is the sense here; as in theos - whomsoever or whatever theos is - having pondered upon, or considered, a

particular matter or many matters. cf. Herodotus [Histories, 9.10] - ὃ μέν σφι ταῦτα συνεβούλευε: οἳ δὲ φρενὶ λαβόντες τὸν λόγον αὐτίκα - where a similar following expression (λαβόντες τὸν λόγον) occurs.

Translations such as 'will/decree of god' are, in my view, far too presumptive.

ἥτις λαβοῦσα τὸν λόγον. This is suggestive of theos having fully comprehended - completely understood - logos [qv. the passage from Herodotus, where the result of the deliberations was understood, approved of: 'taken to heart'], rather than of God 'taking in the Word' or 'receiving the Word'. A 'taking in' from whence to where? A 'receiving' from where?

re-presented. In the sense of a divine mimesis - *μίμησις* - which is the Greek word used here, and which mimesis is a important theme in ancient pagan culture, from Art to religion. It is tempting therefore to consider the suggestion that this mimesis by theos is akin to a masterful, a sublime, work of Art.

Psyche. For ψυχή, and leaving untranslated so as not to impose a particular meaning on the text. Whether what is meant is *anima mundi* - or some-thing else, such as the 'soul' of a human being - is therefore open to debate, although I have used a capital P to intimate that it is, in the text, an important, and primal, principle, and might imply here the original sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; of that 'thing' [or being] which [or who] animates beings making them 'alive'.

9.

male-and-female. ἀρρενόθηλυς. The theos - or deity/divinity/God - is both male and female, which can be interpreted as implying a bisexual nature, or androgyny, or hermaphroditism, or a being with the unique ability to both give birth and inseminate, or a being beyond all such mortal (causal) categories and assumptions.

whose logos brought forth another perceiveration. ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν. An interesting phrase, possibly open to interpretation, for it might suggest 'whose utterance [who by speaking] brought forth...'

Consider, for example, Psalms 33.6:

> τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἐστερεώθησαν καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν
>
> בִּדְבַר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּיו כָּל־ צְבָאָם

with the Greek of LXX, literally translated, meaning "By the logos of the master [κύριος] the heavens were established and, by the pnuema from his mouth, all

their influence" [δύναμις], with the Hebrew stating it is יְהוָה [Yhvh - Jehovah] who has established שָׁמַיִם [shamayim, the heavens] and His וּבְרוּחַ [ruach, pneuma] their power.

Hence, Pœmandres might well be saying that is was by speaking, by the act of uttering or declaiming a logos, that this theos - whomsoever or whatever theos is - brought forth a[nother] perceiveration; that is, another way or means of apprehending - of knowing, understanding, and appreciating - the cosmic order.

artisan. δημιουργόν. It is tempting to transliterate - as demiourgos - so as not to impose a meaning on the text. Does the word here imply - as possibly with Fire, pneuma, etcetera - an assumed elemental force of principle? Or a demiurge who is a (or the) theos of Fire and pnuema? Or does it imply some creator, the Theos of Fire and Pnuema? Or is some sort of artisan meant? And is this an artisan who, possibly by memesis, can create/manufacture a sublime work of Art that at the very least enables us to perceive the cosmic order - the world - in a new way and who, being a theos, can also possibly create, perhaps as a work of Art, a new cosmic order?

However, I incline toward the view, given what follows - ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτά [see below, *fashioned seven viziers*] - that what is meant here is artisan, rather than demiurge.

fashioned seven viziers. ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτά.

The word ἐδημιούργησε occurs in Diogenes Laertius [*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 3.1 (71) - ὅτι καὶ τὸ ὑπόδειγμα ἓν ἦν ἀφ᾽ οὗ αὐτὸν ἐδημιούργησε] in the section concerned with Plato, where the meaning is what someone (such as a worker or artisan) has wrought, fashioned, or produced.

Viziers captures the meaning of διοικητάς (at the time the text was written) in a way that terms such as controllers, procurators, governors, do not, given the modern senses such terms now have and especially given the context, ἡ διοίκησις αὐτῶν εἱμαρμένη καλεῖται: that their administration - how these viziers discharge their duties; how they operate given their powers - "is described as fate." That is, is understood, by we mortals, as fate or destiny.

Vizier is a term used in Persia (in its various older forms) and ancient Egypt (a transcription of a hieroglyph), and also later on in the Middle East and North Africa following the rise of Islam, to denote a person who governed or who ruled over - in the name of a higher authority - a particular region or territory or who had a particular sphere of influence; a role similar to the Viceroy of the British Empire.

The seven viziers are the seven classical planetary bodies, named Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Sun, Jupiter, and Saturn, and well-described in ancient

texts, from ancient Persia onwards. Copenhaver [*Hermetica, The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.105] refers to some of the scholarly literature regarding these 'seven'.

*sphere*s. The context - the cosmic order, and especially the seven planetary viziers who surround or encompass - suggest the meaning of spheres (or orbs) rather than 'circles'. Cf. Sophocles, Antigone, 415-6 where κύκλος could suggest sphere, or orb, or circle, but where circle seems apposite:

χρόνον τάδ᾽ ἦν τοσοῦτον, ἔστ᾽ ἐν αἰθέρι μέσῳ κατέστη λαμπρὸς ἡλίου κύκλος καὶ καῦμ᾽ ἔθαλπε

And long this continued until Helios with his radiant circle had established himself in middle-sky, burning us

10.

downward parsements ... logos of theos. Given that the MSS have στοιχείων τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος the meaning here is conjectural.

'Downward parsements' implies that the fundamental (elemental, primal) components by their nature had a tendency to descend, rather as rain descends down by nature and not because it is 'heavy' [cf. Xenophon, *On Hunting*, 5.3: ἀφανίζει δὲ καὶ ἡ πολλὴ δρόσος καταφέρουσα αὐτά] Hence 'descending parsements' would also be an appropriate translation here.

Regarding θεοῦ λόγος, I have again opted for a transliteration since the common translation here of 'word of God' imposes a particular, Christian, interpretation on the text, (i) given that 'word of god' is most probably what Cyril of Alexandria meant by the phrase, since τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος interestingly occurs in *Cyrilli Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium*:

> μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος ὁ ἐξ αὐτῆς γεννηθεὶς τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός ὁ ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεὸς ἀληθινός τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φωτός ὁ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο τά τε ἐν τῶι οὐρανῶι καὶ τὰ ἐν τῆι γῆι
>
> only-offspring of the logos of theos, born from the essence [οὐσία] of the father, genuine god from genuine god, the phaos from the phaos, by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being

and (ii) given that this paraphrases the Nicene creed of 325 CE, with the notable exception of μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος instead of τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, the latter conventionally translated as 'only begotten Son of God'.

Thus, were the translation of 'word of god' to be accepted, with the implied meaning from the *Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium*, then Pœmandres is, apparently,

here stating that 'the Word of God' - Jesus of Nazareth, true god from true god, Light from Light, and the only begotten son of God by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being - somehow bounded up to be reunited with the work of the artisan-creator (presumably, in this context, God) who is of the same essence [ὁμοούσιος].

While this is a possible interpretation of the text given that Pœmandres uses the same word, in reference to logos, as Cyril of Alexandria - οὐσία (which correctly understood means the very being - the essential nature/physis, or essence - of someone or some-thing) - it does seem somewhat restrictive, considering (i) the many possible meanings, and shades of meaning, of both λόγος and θεός (before and after the advent of Christianity and especially in the context of pagan, Hellenic, weltanschauungen) and (ii) how theos is described by Pœmandres (for example, as being both male and female).

fine artisements of Physis. Fine - καθαρός; clean and free of defects. Artisement - the product of the skilled work of the artisan and the artist; their artisanship (cf. the 16th century English verb artize) and which artisements include beings of various kinds (including living and/or 'archetypal' ones).

It thus becomes clear, especially given what follows, why transliterating φύσις is better than translating it always as 'nature', as if φύσις here implied what we now, after hundreds years of scientific observation and theories such as that of Darwin, understand as 'the natural world', as a 'nature' that we are or can be or should be masters of and can and do and should control, and which we can (or believe we can) understand.

Physis is capitalized here, as in section 14, to suggest the objectification that the text here implies; and objectified as possibly a being - whomsoever or whatever such a being is - or possibly as some apprehension/emanation of theos (whomsoever or whatever theos is), or some fundamental principle, or some form such as what we now understand as an archetype. This Physis, therefore, might or might not be Nature (as Nature was understood in Hellenic times) although, given what follows about Earth delivering (from her womb) living beings [ἡ γῆ ἐξήνεγκεν ἀπ΄ αὐτῆς ἃ εἶχε ζῷα...] it might be that it is not Nature but something else, for example what may have been understood as the genesis of what we now denote by Nature.

It is interesting that here it is "the descending parsements of physis" (not Physis) who were "left, devoid of logos" while in section 14 it is Physis that is, by implication, described as 'devoid of logos' - ᾤκησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν. This is often understood in the pejorative sense, as if this Physis, and the living beings devoid of logos - ζῷα ἤνεγκεν ἄλογα - in section 11, are somehow [to quote one translation] 'unreasoning' beings (or forms) - lacking in reason - and thus somehow [to quote another translation] 'irrational' compared to (and by extension somewhat inferior to) the 'son of theos', which mistaken and unnecessary value-judgements arise from interpreting and translating λόγος as

'Word' or as meaning/implying 'reason'. However, logos is just logos, and devoid of (without) logos - ἄλογος - could be, depending on how logos is interpreted, akin to ἀθάνατος said in respect, for example, of theos [Θεὸν δ᾽ εἶναι ζῷον ἀθάνατον] or implying 'cannot be reduced to something else' and thus heterogeneous [αἱ δὲ ταύτῃ ἀσύμμετροι ἄλογοι καλείσθωσαν], or lacking the faculty of human speech (as in animals, who are not all 'brutish') or (more esoterically) suggestive of *sans denotatum*, of not denoting things or beings by assigning names or terms to them and thus not distinguishing them or marking them as separate from the whole, the unity, of which one type of wholeness is Physis understood as the goddess of Nature, as the creative force that is the genesis of, and which maintains the balance of, the life which inhabits the Earth.

Substance. ὕλη. Since the Greek term does not exactly mean 'matter' in the modern sense (qv. the science of Physics) it is better to find an alternative. Hence 'substance' - the *materia* of 'things' and living beings - contrasted with οὐσία, essence.

11.

the perceiveration of that artisan. As previously, and like physis, both νοῦς and λόγος are here objectified.

spinning them around. δινῶν ῥοίζῳ.

12.

brought forth...a mortal. ἀπεκύησεν ἄνθρωπον. The word ἀπεκύησεν in relation to πατὴρ perhaps refers back to where theos, the perceiveration, is described as being both male and female [ἀρρενόθηλυς] although whether the meaning here is the literal 'gave birth' or the descriptive 'brought forth' is interesting, especially a different word, ἐξήνεγκεν [which the English word delivered - in the sense of giving birth, of 'a woman having disburdened herself of a fœtus' - usefully describes] is used in reference to the (female) Earth. This different usage, and the Epistle of James, written not long before the Pœmandres tractate where 'brought forth' is apposite [v.1.15 ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον] incline me toward 'brought forth' here.

In respect of ἄνθρωπος (often emended to ᾽Ανθρωπος) the sense here, as often, is the gender neutral 'human being' - a mortal - and not 'a man'.

image. μορφή. Image in both senses of the English term - as outward physical appearance, and as the impression (or concept) that others may have of, or see in, a person.

Image plays an important part in what follows; the image that the son of theos

has of himself and sees reflected back to him and which image he loves. The image Physis has of him and sees a reflection of, and the image which he has of her and which makes him desire her.

bequeathed to him all his works of Art. παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα. This is a very interesting phrase; theos as artisan, as artist, whose works - whose creations, whose artisements, whose divine re-presentations (μίμησις) - apparently include both the cosmic order, the artisan mentioned previously, and we mortals. Less suggestive of the meaning is 'bequeathed to him all his (various) artisements'.

13.

that father. Reading πατρί, with the MSS, and not the emendation πυρί.

Ingressing to the artisan's realm. γενόμενος ἐν τῇ δημιουργικῇ σφαίρᾳ. The realm of the artisan: where the artisan works, and produces artisements and divine works of art, and where someone - here, the mortal, son of theos - can learn and master that skill and produce his own works. This realm is that of the seven spheres, the seven viziers.

function. τάξεως. Cf. Plato, *Laws,* 809d - ἡμερῶν τάξεως εἰς μηνῶν περιόδους καὶ μηνῶν εἰς ἕκαστον τὸν ἐνιαυτόν ἵνα ὧραι καὶ θυσίαι καὶ ἑορταὶ τὰ προσήκοντ᾽ ἀπολαμβάνουσαι ἑαυταῖς ἕκασται τῷ κατὰ φύσιν ἄγεσθαι - where the sense is of the periodic, the orderly, functioning of things; of days into weeks, weeks into months, and of months into a year; and which functionality enables us to know when to celebrate and undertake the seasonal festivals and feasts.

limit. περιφέρεια. Not here the literal Euclidean meaning of circumference [for example, Euclid, *Elements*, Book 13, Proposition 10 - ἐπεὶ ἴση ἐστὶν ἡ ΑΒΓΗ περιφέρεια τῇ ΑΕΔΗ περιφερείᾳ] but rather of the limits, the boundary, set or marked by the seven spheres; a limit that the mortal, son of theos, is "determined to burst out past".

imposed their strength upon the Fire. Cf. section 7 - περιίσχεσθαι τὸ πῦρ δυνάμει μεγίστῃ (the fire, embraced by a strong force).

14.

burst through the strength of the spheres. I follow the reading of the MSS, which have ἀναρρήξας τὸ κράτος τῶν κύκλων, amended by Scott and Nock to ἀναρρήξας τὸ κύτος [burst through the container].

harmonious structure. Here, ἁρμονία implies the 'structure' of the κόσμος, the

cosmic order [qv. the note on κόσμος in section 7] and which structure is harmonious [qv. ἁρμονίας ἐναρμόνιος in section 15].

vigour. ἐνέργεια. The words 'force' and 'energy' bring too many irrelevant modern connotations to the text, and 'vigour' well expresses the meaning of ἐνέργεια here, with the suggestion, as often elsewhere, of 'vigorous activity'.

When she beheld. This, as what follows suggests, is Physis, personified. In respect of beholding such beauty, cf. section 8 - *having seen the beauty of the cosmic order*.

on Earth, his shadow. τὸ σκίασμα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Cf. Diogenes Laertius [*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.146, Zeno] not especially for the similarity - τὸ τῆς γῆς σκίασμα - but more for the interesting section, preceding this mention of the shadow of the moon on Earth during an eclipse, of how the cosmic order came into being [142] and for the equally interesting following discussion [147] which concerns the attributes and images of theos - the god - who is described as 'the father of all', who has both male and female aspects, and which aspects of the divinity are given their classical pagan names with their areas of authority specified. The interest lies in how the classical gods, and the creation of the cosmic order, and thus Hellenic paganism, were understood and remembered not long after the Hermetica was written, and thus how they echo in part some of the metaphysical themes in, and the cosmogony of, the Pœmandres tractate.

Physis grasped [...] *intimately joined together*. ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν. The sense of μίγνυμι here is that of a physical union, a sexual joining together - not of some 'philosophical mingling' of 'forms'. Similarly, περιπλέκω is not some ordinary 'embrace' but a sexual twinning (of limbs). Cf. Hesiod, Theogony, 375 - Κρίῳ δ᾽ Εὐρυβίη τέκεν ἐν φιλότητι μιγεῖσα Ἀστραῖόν.

jumelle. For διπλοῦς. The much underused and descriptive English word jumelle - from the Latin gemellus - describes some-thing made in, or composed of, two parts, and is therefore most suitable here, more so than common words such as 'double' or 'twofold'.

deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. Here, in respect of my choice of English words, I must admit to being influenced by Chapman's lovely poetic translation of the Hymn to Venus from the Homeric Hymns:

> That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man

In respect of οὐσιώδης, I prefer, given the context, 'inner' - suggestive of 'real' - rather than the conventional 'essential'; although 'vital' is an alternative

translation here, suggested by what Eusebius wrote (c.326 CE) about φῶς [phaos] pre-existing even before the cosmic order, with φῶς used by Eusebius to mean Light in the Christian sense:

> τό τε φῶς τὸ προκόσμιον καὶ τὴν πρὸ αἰώνων νοερὰν καὶ οὐσιώδη σοφίαν τόν τε ζῶντα [Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 1, chapter 2]
>
> The Light of the proto-cosmos, the comprehension and vital wisdom existing before the Aeons

wyrd. For ἡ εἱμαρμένη. A much better choice, here, than either 'fate' or 'destiny' given how overused both those words now are and how their interpretation is also now so varied. An overview of how the concept may have been understood in the late Hellenic period (around the time the Hermetica was probably written) is given in the 2nd century CE discourse *De Fato*, attributed to Plutarch, which begins by stating that εἱμαρμένη has been described in two ways, as ἐνέργεια (vigorous activity) and as οὐσία (essence) -

> πρῶτον τοίνυν ἴσθι, ὅτι εἱμαρμένη διχῶς καὶ λέγεται καὶ νοεῖται: ἡ μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἐνέργεια ἡ δ᾽ οὐσία

of a wakeful one <...> There is some text missing, indicated by <...>, for after ἄϋπνος ἀπὸ ἀΰπνου the MSS have κρατεῖται [mastered/ruled by - cf. 4 Maccabees 2.9 ᾗ ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου κρατεῖται διὰ τὸν λογισμὸν]. Although some suggestions have been made as to this missing text (such as "ruled by love and sleep" [ἔρωτος καὶ ὕπνου] - they are purely conjectural.

16.

<...> *my perceiveration*. Again, the suggestions for the missing text are purely conjectural.

a mysterium esoteric. For κεκρυμμένον μυστήριον. The term mysterium - a truth or insight or knowledge about some-thing, which is considered religious and/or metaphysical ('hermetic') and which is unknown/unrevealed to or as yet undiscovered by others, and hence 'mysterious' to them - expresses the meaning of the Greek here (as the word mystery by itself does not). Likewise in respect of esoteric - kept concealed or which is concealed/hidden to most or which is revealed to an individual by someone who already 'knows' what the mysterium in question is.

Hence why I write *a* mysterium here rather than *the* mysterium, and why "a mysterium, esoteric even to this day", is better than the rather bland "the mystery kept hidden until this very day".

possessed the physis of the harmonious seven. The seven viziers. A more literal translation would be 'possessed the physis of the [harmonious] structure of the

seven'. Here, physis could mean 'character' (of a person) or some-thing more archetypal/elemental of which such character or personal characteristics are an outward manifestation.

seven male-and-female humans. These seven humans, born from Physis, are thus akin to both theos and the child of theos who also have a male (a masculous) and a female (a muliebral) aspect. That is, although mortal - having been brought forth by and from divinities - these humans are, in their very being, both male and female and thus, in their creation, dissimilar to ordinary mortals, for reasons which Pœmandres goes on to explain.

In addition, these seven mortals have the same or a similar physis as the 'harmonious seven'.

ætherean. For μεταρσίους. Ætherean is the metaphorical sense of μεταρσίους here, not 'exalted' or 'sublime' (which imply some sort of human admiration or some sort of religious attitude/apprehension). For the sense is similar to what Dio Chrysostom wrote, in his tract on leadership, about the sons of Boreas, who - semi-divine - have the attributes of their father and who are depicted in and belonging to their natural realm:

> ὁποίους τοὺς Βορεάδας ἐνεθυμήθησάν τε καὶ ἔγραψαν οἱ γραφεῖς ἐλαφρούς τε καὶ μεταρσίους ταῖς τοῦ πατρὸς αὔραις συνθέοντας [Orationes, 4.1]

Ætherean is used in the poetic sense - that is, 'supernal', meaning of the harmonious - the heavenly - cosmic order and also refined: of the essence, οὐσία, and thus not just ὕλη, substance (qv. section 10).

Primary explanation. πρῶτον λόγον [cf. Plato, *Republic*, Book 3 [395b] εἰ ἄρα τὸν πρῶτον λόγον διασώσομεν]. An explanation of our origins, as mortals, and thus of the 'first principle' that forms the basis of the 'hermetic weltanschauung'.

17.

those seven came into being in this way. It is interesting to compare 'these seven' with 'the 'nine' and the seven spheres (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Moon) of the Somnium Scipionis described by Cicero:

> Novem tibi orbibus vel potius globis conexa sunt omnia, quorum unus est caelestis, extimus, qui reliquos omnes complectitur, summus ipse deus arcens et continens ceteros; in quo sunt infixi illi, qui volvuntur, stellarum cursus sempiterni. Cui subiecti sunt septem, qui versantur retro contrario motu atque caelum. Ex quibus summum globum possidet illa, quam in terris Saturniam nominant. Deinde est hominum

> generi prosperus et salutaris ille fulgor, qui dicitur Iovis; tum rutilus horribilisque terris, quem Martium dicitis; deinde subter mediam fere regionem Sol obtinet, dux et princeps et moderator luminum reliquorum, mens mundi et temperatio, tanta magnitudine, ut cuncta sua luce lustret et compleat. Hunc ut comites consequuntur Veneris alter, alter Mercurii cursus, in infimoque orbe Luna radiis solis accensa convertitur. Infra autem iam nihil est nisi mortale et caducum praeter animos munere deorum hominum generi datos; supra Lunam sunt aeterna omnia. Nam ea, quae est media et nona, Tellus, neque movetur et infima est, et in eam feruntur omnia nutu suo pondera. [*De Re Publica,* Book VI, 17]
>
> Nine orbs - more correctly, spheres - connect the whole cosmic order, of which one - beyond the others but enfolding them - is where the uppermost deity dwells, enclosing and containing all. There - embedded - are the constant stars with their sempiternal movement, while below are seven spheres whose cyclicity is different, and one of which is the sphere given the name on Earth of Saturn [...]

Muliebral. For θηλυκὴ. The term muliebral derives from the classical Latin word *muliebris*, and is used here to refer to those positive traits, abilities, and qualities, that are conventionally and historically associated with women. Muliebral is more expressive - and more redolent of the meaning of the Greek - than 'feminine', especially given how the word 'feminine' is so often misused (sometimes in a pejorative way).

It should be noted that the older reading of θηλυκὴ γὰρ ὁ ἀὴρ makes Air - not Earth - the muliebral one.

Lustful. For ὀχευτικόν. The sense is similar to ἐπιθυμία as used, for example, in Romans 14.13 - τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖσθε εἰς ἐπιθυμίας [make no intention regarding the flesh, to gratify its carnal desires]

From Æther, the pnuema. ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε. It is best to transliterate αἰθήρ - as Æther - given that it, like Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and pnuema, is an elemental principle, or a type of (or a particular) being, or some-thing archetypal.

cyclic until its completion. μέχρι περιόδου τέλους. I follow the reading of the Turnebus MS, taking περίοδος to refer to a posited cyclic - periodic - cosmic order, of Aeons, which periodicity continues until its purpose is achieved/fulfilled/completed.

18.

the connexions between all things. Compare this unbinding of the cosmic bonds with the 'connexions' that make up the nine spheres in the Somnium Scipionis

[qv. the quotation from Cicero, above].

bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral. ἐγένετο τὰ μὲν ἀρρενικὰ ἐν μέρει τὰ δὲ θηλυκὰ ὁμοίως. The meaning of ἀρρενικὰ and θηλυκὰ are not 'male' and 'female' but rather masculous (masculine) and muliebral (of or considered appropriate to women).

propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning. The same Greek words - αὐξάνεσθε and πληθύνεσθε - occur in LXX, Genesis 1.22: ηὐλόγησεν αὐτὰ ὁ θεὸς λέγων αὐξάνεσθε καὶ πληθύνεσθε ["Theos praised them, saying: propagate and spawn"; Tyndale - "God blessed them saying, grow and multiply"; KJV - "God blessed them saying, Be fruitful and multiply"].

creations and artisements. κτίσματα καὶ δημιουργήματα. Although κτίσμα is generally translated here as 'creature' (as also for example in most translations of Revelation 5.13) I incline toward the view, given the context, that the more general sense of a 'creation' (or 'created thing') is meant - cf. Strabo, Geography, Book 16. 1 [ἧς ἐστι κτίσμα ἡ Βαβυλών] where what is described is a construct, a creation - a work constructed by or on behalf of someone. Here, what is described are the creations of theos.

In respect of 'artisements', see section 10.

the perceiver. ὁ ἔννους.

Eros as responsible for death. τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα. The consensus is, and has been, that ἔρωτα here signifies 'carnal desire' - or something similar - so that it is assumed that what is meant is some sort of ascetic (or Gnostic or puritanical) statement about how sexual desire should be avoided or at the very least controlled. However, this seems rather at variance with the foregoing - regarding propagating and spawning - which inclines me to suggest that what is meant here is 'eros', not necessarily personified as the classical deity (ἡδ᾽ Ἔρος ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ᾽ ἀνθρώπων δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν), although the comparison is interesting, but rather as an elemental or archetypal principle, akin to νοῦς and λόγος. Consider, for example, the following from *Daphnis and Chloe,* written by Longus around the same time as the Corpus Hermeticum: πάντως γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἔρωτα ἔφυγεν ἢ φεύξεται μέχρις ἂν κάλλος ᾖ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ βλέπωσιν [Book 1, Proem, 4 - "no one can avoid or has ever been able to avoid Eros, while there is beauty and eyes which perceive"]. In modern terms, few - poetically, metaphorically, none - have avoided or could avoid, at some time in their life, the unconscious power of the anima/animus.

Eros - as some-thing similar to an archetypal principle, applicable to or of (existing in/part of) "all beings/creations/things" - might also go some way toward explaining the καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα that follows in the text (for example in the Turnebus MS) for which various emendations have been proposed,

including omitting it altogether.

19.

foreknowing, through wyrd.....coagulations. The foreknowing of theos, which enabled theos through wyrd and the cosmic structure to 'found the generations'. The coagulations, the copulation, of beings (created things).

self-knowledge. ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν. A pedantic aside: here, as often elsewhere, I have gone against convention (grammatical and otherwise) by, where possible, choosing neutral personal pronouns, thus avoiding sentences such as "And he who has self-knowledge..." This sometimes results in using third person plural pronouns - such as 'their' and 'they' - as if they were personal pronouns, or using constructs such as "the one of self-knowledge" or "whoever has self-knowledge". In addition, it should be noted that the grammatical categorization of a word (male, female, gender neutral) is only a grammatical categorization and does not always reflect the nature of the being that that word denotes or refers to.

a particular benefit. τὸ περιούσιον ἀγαθόν. Literally, 'the particular benefit' [an alternative, possibly better, translation would be 'the esoteric benefit']. What the text refers to is not some abstract 'good' but rather what is good for, what benefits, the person. Thus, self-knowledge can lead to a particular, a specific, benefit.

perceptively. αἰσθητῶς - cf. Strabo, *Geography*, Book 3, chapter 5.1, a description of a high tide; of the sea, due to the moon, begin to perceptively/visibly both rise and go far onto the shore - ἄρχεσθαι διοιδεῖν τὴν θάλατταν καὶ ἐπιβαίνειν τῆς γῆς αἰσθητῶς μέχρι μεσουρανήσεως.

20.

to discover things. That is, discover/apprehend for yourself, to reveal (dis-cover) the nature of things, and thus fully understand them; qv. section 3 ('apprehend the physis of beings') and section 6 ('then discover phaos and become familiar with it') and section 7 ('such I observed and discovered because of those words of Pœmandres').

why death is expected for those who are in death. διὰ τί ἄξιοί εἰσι τοῦ θανάτου οἱ ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ ὄντες. Somewhat obscure, given the phrase 'in death' and given that what follows - "because originally..." - does not really offer an explanation of it.

I take the meaning of ἀξιόω here to be 'expect' rather than 'worthy' given (i) what the English phrase 'they are worthy of death' (or 'they deserve death') implies, an implication - a moralizing attitude - that is not justified by either the immediate context or the rest of the text, and (ii) usages such as (a) νῦν παρ᾽

ὑμῶν τὸ αὐτὸ ἀξιοῦμεν κομίζεσθαι ['we now expect to receive the same from you'; Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War,* Book 1, chapter 43] and (b) ὥστε οὐκ οἴκτου οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἄξιοί εἰσιν, ἀλλὰ τιμωρίας ['they are expected to be punished not pitied', Hyperides, *Orations Against Philippides*, 2.12]

Nourishes. ἀρδεύεται here is obviously metaphorical, as it literally means "is irrigated/watered" as in Diodorus Siculus when he describes India - τὰ πολλὰ δὲ τῆς χώρας ἀρδεύεται καὶ διὰ τοῦτο διττοὺς ἔχει τοὺς κατ᾽ ἔτος καρπούς ['much of the land is irrigated which is why there are two yields a year'; *Bibliotheca Historica*, Book 2, 35.3]

21.

progress within themselves. εἰς αὐτὸν χωρεῖ. Literally, 'progress to (or proceed/advance toward) him', with the usual assumption being that it is theos that is meant (hence, 'proceed toward theos'), with the alternative translation, of 'progress to themselves', ignored. However, given the immediate context - of a self-discovery - and given examples such as Mark 7.15 (εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτὸν, entering *into* him) and given that (insofar as I understand it) the tractate concerns (i) self-knowing, (ii) a 'mysterium' that is esoteric, and (iii) a desire to know and to understand 'the physis of beings', rather than a religious 'progressing toward god' à la Thomas à Kempis, then I am inclined to favour the somewhat radical translation of 'within themselves'.

the father of all beings. ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων. The word 'all' by itself does not really capture the sense of ὅλων here, which is 'all beings'. The phrase ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων occurs in many other writings, some of which are Christian. For instance in the Τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰουστίνουν πρὸς Τρύφωνα Ἰουδαῖον Διάλογος [The Dialogue of Justinus with Trypho, a Jew] where it is said in the context of Christ being crucified, dying, and then being raised again by 'the father of all' for the benefit of all human beings - τὸν ἑαυτοῦ Χριστὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐκ παντὸς γένους ἀνθρώπων ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων τὰς πάντων κατάρας ἀναδέξασθαι ἐβουλήθη (xcv, 2).

However, interestingly and relevant here, the phrase also occurs in the polemic by Irenaeus against the 'heresy of gnosticism' - the *Adversus Haereses* [ἔλεγχος και ἀνατροπή της ψευδωνύμου γνώσεω] - written not long before the Pœmandres tractate:

> μεταδοῦναί σοι θέλω τῆς ἐμῆς χάριτος ἐπειδὴ ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων τὸν ἄγγελόν σου διαπαντὸς βλέπει πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ὁ δὲ τόπος τοῦ μεγέθους ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστι δι' ἡμᾶς ἐγκαταστῆσαι (Book I, Chapter 13, 3)
>
> I desire to pass on to you my Charis because the father of all beings has observed that your angel is constantly before him

These are the words Irenaeus ascribes to a person called Marcus, 'the heretic'; words used by this person skilled in the trickery of sorcery (μαγικῆς κυβείας ἐμπειρότατον) to, apparently, entice men and wealthy women to be his followers. Irenaeus then goes on, in a passage also quoted by Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (4.11.5), to describe some of the rites - the 'disgusting initiation into the mysteries' - of these people, and which rites include a 'mystical marriage' (πνευματικὸν γάμον) as well as a doxology to 'the father and the mother', εἰς ὄνομα ἀγνώστου πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων εἰς ἀλήθειαν μητέρα τῶν πάντων, and which doxology, with its contrast between ὅλων (ascribed to the father) and πάντων (ascribed to the mother) may go some way toward explaining the meaning of ὅλων as used here, in the Pœmandres tractate, given that μητέρα πάντων - as Γαία, Earth Mother - is the subject of, among other things, one of the Homeric hymns, Εἰς Γῆν Μητέρα Πάντων, where She is described as πρέσβιστος, the elder among beings, and the mother of the gods, θεῶν μήτηρ.

Thus, πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων as the father of all beings, and μητέρα τῶν πάντων as the mother of being, of all Life, both mortal and immortal.

22.

respectful deeds. ὁσίοις. A difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as religious, pious, holy, devout, blessed, sinless, saintly, humble - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism; meanings which, in my view, are not or may not be relevant here, and whose use would distort one's understanding of the text.

The correct meaning is someone who, aware of or sensitive to the difference between the numinous and un-numinous [regarding 'numinous', see the note on ἅγιος in section 5], seeks to avoid, in their behaviour, what might cause them to hubriatically 'overstep the limits' and thus unbalance them, so taking them away from that natural balance and that respect for the numinous, which they personally, by their (or a particular) way of living (personal, religious, spiritual, mystical, or otherwise) seek or desire to cultivate, or which (and importantly) is a natural part of their admirable (and often admired) character. For example:

> ἐκεῖνός γε μὴν ὑμνῶν οὔποτ᾽ ἔληγεν ὡς τοὺς θεοὺς οἴοιτο οὐδὲν ἧττον ὁσίοις ἔργοις ἢ ἁγνοῖς ἱεροῖς ἥδεσθαι ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ὁπότε εὐτυχοίη οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ὑπερεφρόνει ἀλλὰ θεοῖς χάριν ᾔδει καὶ θαρρῶν πλείονα ἔθυεν ἢ ὀκνῶν ηὔχετο εἴθιστο δὲ φοβούμενος μὲν ἱλαροὺς φαίνεσθαι εὐτυχῶν δὲ πρᾷος εἶναι [Xenophon, *Agesilaus*, 11.2]
>
> this person, whom I praise, never ceased to believe that the gods delight in respectful deeds just as much as in consecrated temples,

> and, when blessed with success, he was never prideful but rather gave thanks to the gods. He also made more offerings to them when he was confident than supplications when he felt hesitant, and, in appearance, it was his habit to be cheerful when doubtful and mild-mannered when successful.

For these reasons, I have translated not as one English word, but as the phrase 'respectful deeds'. See also the note on εὐσεβέω below.

honourable. ἀγαθός. The sense is not of being 'good' in some moralistic, sanctimonious, superior, way, but rather of being of noble character, as for example described in the Corpus Aristotelicum:

> τῆς δὲ φρονήσεώς ἐστι τὸ βουλεύσασθαι, τὸ κρῖναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἱρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πᾶσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὁμιλῆσαι ὀρθῶς [*De Virtutibus et Vitiis Libellus* 1250a]
>
> It is part of wisdom to accept advice, to distinguish the honourable, the dishonourable, and all that is, in life, acceptable or to be avoided; to fairly use all resources; to be genuine in company

refined. καθαροῖς. Literally it means 'physically clean', often in the sense of being in a state of ritual purification: qv. the inscription on one of the ancient tablets (totenpasse) found in Thurii - ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά χθονίων βασίλεια (in arrivance, purified from the purified, mistress of the chthonic).

Since the English word 'pure' is unsuitable given its connotations - religious, sanctimonious, political, and otherwise - I have opted for the not altogether satisfactory 'refined'.

compassionate. ἐλεήμοσι. Those who undertake merciful, charitable, humane, deeds; qv. Luke 11.41 (πλὴν τὰ ἐνόντα δότε ἐλεημοσύνην, καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντα καθαρὰ ὑμῖν ἐστιν), Acts 10:2, κτλ.

aware of the numinous. εὐσεβοῦσι. As with ὁσίοις, εὐσεβέω is a difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as reverent, pious - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism. The correct sense is 'aware of the numinous', and thus imbued with that sense of duty, that sense of humility - or rather, an awareness of their human limitations - which makes them appreciate and respect the numinous in whatever form, way, or manner they appreciate, feel, intuit, apprehend, or understand, the numinous, be it in terms of the gods, the god, Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ᾽ Ἐρινύες, God, or whatever. It is this

awareness which inclines a person toward 'respectful deeds' [qv. ὁσίοις, above].

soon acquire knowledge of the whole. εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι. Knowledge of 'the whole picture'; of what has been and is being discussed: perceiveration; the cosmic structure; the nature of humans; the seven viziers; and so on. The sense is not "gnosis of all things", which - in its hubris - is incompatible with the immediately proceeding mention of εὐσεβέω and ὁσίοις.

affectionately gracious toward. There are two ways of interpreting τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς and what follows. (i) As if it is some kind of Christian eulogy by the faithful, with mention of "lovingly propitiating the father" and the "singing of hymns" to him; and (ii) in a rather more religiously neutral way with phrases such as ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς and words such as ὑμνεῦσιν suggesting the more Hellenic "affectionately gracious" and "celebrating in song". I have chosen the latter, as it is, in my view, more in harmony with the rest of the text.

the influencing impressions. αἰσθήσεις. What is meant here is not simply 'the [bodily] senses' nor what is perceptible to or perceived by the senses, but rather those particular impressions, conveyed by the senses, which influence a person in a way which is disliked because they do or they can affect a person in a manner detrimental to their immortality. That is, not all 'feelings' nor all 'sensations' are meant but only those which impresses upon [cf. Circero, *Academica*, 2.6, impressum effictumque] a person in a certain way and thus affect that person also in a certain way, as 'impressionable feelings' do:

> αὐτὸς δὲ διὰ ποιημάτων φιλοσοφεῖ, καθάπερ Ἡσίοδός τε καὶ Ξενοφάνης καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς κριτήριον δὲ τὸν λόγον εἶπε: τάς τε αἰσθήσεις μὴ ἀκριβεῖς ὑπάρχειν φησὶ γοῦν [Diogenes Laertius, Parmenides, 9.3]
>
> he himself, through the form of verse, presented his knowledge, as did Hesiod, Xenophanes and Empedocles, stating that it was a way of judging what was reasonable since impressionable feelings were not an accurate enough starting point

This is the type of 'impression' - the type of influence - meant by some alchemical texts, for example, in the *Compound of Alchymy*, by Ripley, contained in the Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum ['the Body of the Spryte taketh impression' (ix. xi)] and also, some centuries later, by Hume in his *Treatise on Human Nature* ['those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name impressions' (I. i. 12)]. Cf. also Aristotle, Poetics 1451a - τοῦ δὲ μήκους ὅρος ὁ μὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀγῶνας καὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν οὐ τῆς τέχνης ἐστίν - where what is meant is the 'impression' made upon an audience, which thus influences them.

the bad. The usual translation of κακός here, as often elsewhere, is 'evil'.

However, I regard such a translation as unhelpful, given that the English word 'evil' is (1) now often interpreted and understood in a moralistic, preconceived, way according to some theological dogma/criteria and/or according to some political/social doctrine, and (2) that it does not denote what the classical and the Hellenic term κακός does.

Classically understood κακός is what is bad in the sense of some-thing rotten or unhealthy, or – the opposite of κάλος – what is displeasing to see. κακός is also what is unlucky, a misfortune, and/or injurious, as for example in The Agamemnon

> τὸ μὲν γυναῖκα πρῶτον ἄρσενος δίχα
> ἦσθαι δόμοις ἔρημον ἔκπαγλον κακόν (vv. 862-3)
>
> Primarily, for a lady to be separate from her mate -
> To remain unprotected by family – is a harsh misfortune

When applied to a person, the sense is of a 'rotten' person; someone with bad, harmful, physis; a bad - dishonourable, weak, cowardly - personal character; someone whose nature, for examples, inclines them toward doing harm and doing what is generally considered to be wrong.

This sense is still appropriate to Hellenic usage. For example, in respect of Romans 12.17 with its contrast of κακός and κάλος:

> μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες προνοούμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων
>
> Do not render what is bad with what is bad; rather, show concern for what all humans see is good

Similarly with the synonym σαπρός, as for example in Luke 6.43-5:

> Οὐ γὰρ ἐστιν δένδρον καλὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν σαπρόν, οὐδὲ πάλιν δένδρον σαπρὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλόν, ἕκαστον γὰρ δένδρον ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου καρποῦ γινώσκεται· ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ προφέρει τὸ πονηρόν· ἐκ γὰρ περισσεύματος καρδίας λαλεῖ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ
>
> For no healthy tree brings forth rotten fruit just as a rotten tree cannot bring forth healthy fruit. For each tree is judged by its fruit. A good person from the store of good in their heart brings forth what is good, and a bad person from their bad store brings forth what is bad; for it is because of an overflowing heart that the mouth speaks.

23.
hubriatic. ἀσεβέσι; someone lacking in or who is arrogantly disdainful of σέβομαι, of what is regarded as honourable, revered, respected. Someone who is thus 'hubriatic'. It is the opposite of εὐσεβέω, that is, the opposite of someone who is aware of and respectful of the numinous.

the avenging daemon. τῷ τιμωρῷ δαίμον.

Τιμωρῷ is an epithet of the god Mars, mentioned by Cassius Dio Cocceianus in his *Historiae Romanae* when he recounts how Caligula, celebrating the murder of someone, sent three daggers to the temple of Mars the Avenger, in Rome, as offerings to the god - ξιφίδια τρία τῷ Ἄρει τῷ Τιμωρῷ ἐς [Book 59, chapter 22 v.7].

Correctly understood, a δαίμων (daemon) is neither a 'demon' nor one of the pantheon of major Greek gods - θεοί - but rather a lesser type of divinity who might be assigned by those gods to bring good fortune or misfortune to human beings and/or to watch over certain human beings and especially particular numinous (sacred) places.

which tests them. καὶ τοῦτον βασανίζει. The sense here is rather obscure, with some proposed emendations (for example, οὕτως, and τοῦτο for τοῦτον). I take the sense here of βασανίζω to be 'tested', as in being 'put to the test'; a sense in accord with what precedes and with what follows.

24.

Anados. ἄνοδος. A transliteration, as the word has specific meanings in ancient Greek 'mystery cults' and in Hellenic 'mysticism', one of which meanings is the ascent, or progress, or journey, of the initiate/individual toward their goal, however that goal/ascent/progress/journey is described and/or understood, and/or represented (symbolically, mythologically, or otherwise). Quite often, the journey - the 'way up' - is described as the one between the living and the dead (the next life) or as one from the chthonic (the underworld) to our mortal world; which journey sometimes involves a symbolic/mythological death and then a rebirth.

the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed. ἐν τῇ ἀναλύσει τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ὑλικοῦ παραδίδως αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα εἰς ἀλλοίωσιν. Literally, 'in the dissolution of the material body it hands over that body to alteration'.

ethos. ἦθος. Here, ethos in the personal sense; the 'spirit' - the personality - of an individual: their traits, character, disposition, nature, temperament.

25.

in the first realm. The sphere of the Moon, the first of the seven planetary/alchemical/astrological spheres, realms, or emanations - the ἑβδομάς; hebdomad, septenary system - that, in respect of the journey (ἄνοδος) of the mortal toward immortality, form the basis of, are emanations of, the harmonious cosmic structure (qv. sections 9 and 14). On this journey, the mortal passes through each realm - sphere - in turn.

which grows and which fades. Cf. Sextus Empiricus - ταύτην δὲ ἤτοι αὐξητικὴν ἢ μειωτικήν [Adversus Mathematicos, IX, 393]

arrogance of command. Reading ὑπερηφανίαν not προφανίαν.

26.

ogdoadic physis. ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν. An interesting and important term, often overlooked and often misinterpreted. What is meant is not a realm - ζώνῃ - or sphere, similar to but 'beyond' the seven realms, but rather 'of what' the mortal has become, is reborn as, at the end of the journey: partaking in and being of 'the ogdoadic physis', and thus sharing the being/existence of those who have, or who have attained, that particular type of being/existence/physis. The existence, that is, of an immortal beyond the seven emanations.

with the others there, celebrates the father in song. ὑμνεῖ σὺν τοῖς οὖσι τὸν πατέρα. Again - qv. section 22 - not 'hymns' in the Christian sense but rather celebrating in song/verse/chant; celebrating the father of this mortal, the parent of all mortals, and ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, the 'grandfather' of all beings (qv. section 21).

force. δύναμις. Cf. section 7. Those forces, those particular powers - or, more precisely, that type (or those types) of being(s) or existence - that are not only beyond the septenary system but beyond the ogdoadic physis of those mortals who have, because of their journey (ἄνοδος) through the septenary system, achieved immortality.

It is therefore easy to understand why some considered there were, or represented their understanding/insight by, 'nine' (seven plus two) fundamental cosmic emanations, or by nine realms or spheres [qv. the quote from Cicero in section 17] - the seven of the hebdomad, plus the one of the 'ogdoadic physis' mentioned here, plus the one (also mentioned here) of what is beyond even this 'ogdoadic physis'. However, as this text describes, there are seven realms or spheres - a seven-fold path to immortality, accessible to living mortals - and then two types of existence (not spheres) beyond these, accessible only after the mortals has journeyed along that path and then, having 'offered up' certain things along the way (their mortal ethos), 'handed over their body to its death'. Ontologically, therefore, the seven might somewhat simplistically be described as partaking of what is 'causal' (of what is mortal) and the two types of

existence beyond the seven as partaking of - as being - 'acausal' (of what is immortal). Thus, Pœmandres goes on to say, the former mortal - now immortal - moves on (from this first type of 'acausal existence') to become these forces (beyond the ogdoadic physis) to thus finally 'unite with theos': αὐτοὶ εἰς δυνάμεις ἐαυ τοὺς παραδιδόασι καὶ δυνάμεις γενόμενοι ἐν θεῷ γίνονται.

26.

become united with theos. ἐν θεῷ γίνονται. Literally, '[they] become in theos', or '[they] enter into theos', although given what follows - θεωθῆναι - what is meant is 'become of/be united with theos', and thus 'become-of' what is no longer mortal but rather both immortal and 'of theos'.

become of theos. θεωθῆναι. This does not mean 'made divine/god', or 'achieve divinity' or 'become god/a god', or deification, but rather, having become immortal, to be (re)united with theos and thus, by such a 'becoming', re-present (become-of) in that new (acausal) existence the numinosity of theos, and which return and re-presentation is the real aim of our mortal lives and the function of λόγος, and of the λόγοι (such as pneumal logos and the phaomal logos). That is, as explained in some of the rather neglected works of Maximus of Constantinople [qv. Migne Patrologiae Graeca, 90 and 91], Θεώσις in the sense of reunited with theos - ultimately because of ἀγάπη - without actually being or becoming 'a divinity' or 'God':

> τῆς ἐπὶ τῷ θεωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μυστικῆς ἐνεργείας λήψεται πέρας κατὰ πάντα τρόπον χωρὶς μόνης δηλονότι τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος. *Quæstiones ad Thalassium de Scriptura Sacra*, XXII [Patrologiae Graeca, 90, c.0318]
>
> the end of the opus mysterium of human beings becoming of Theos can be in all ways except one, namely that of having the identity of His Essence

the noble goal. τὸ ἀγαθὸν τέλος. This might well be taken as an axiom of the 'hermetic' weltanschauung presented in this tractate. In respect of ἀγαθός as honourable/noble, see the note in section 22.

those who seek to acquire knowledge. Given the use here of the word γνῶσις, the sense could be interpreted, and has by others been interpreted, to mean 'those who seek to acquire/attain gnosis'.

other mortals can - through theos - escape. I take the sense of σώζω here be to 'escape', for the English word 'saved' now imposes, after nearly two thousand years of scriptural exegesis and preaching, various religious preconceptions on the text. Also, the usual translation of 'saved by god' is somewhat at variance with the hermetic/gnostic weltanschauung which suggests a progression -

ἄνοδος - through the realms/spheres in order to attain immortality.

For the 'escape' is from the mortal to the immortal, and therefore to be 'saved', because of theos, so that (qv. section 21) they can "progress to return to Life"

27.

joined with those forces. The meaning here is somewhat obscure, although it possibly signifies that Pœmandres leaves the mortal realm and rejoins - returns to - his existence, beyond the hebdomad, where those forces/powers exist.

an insight of great importance. μεγίστην θέαν. An important 'insight into' the workings of the cosmos, immortality, and the nature of mortals, rather than 'a vision' or a 'revelation'.

awareness of the numinous. See the note on 'aware of the numinous'/εὐσεβέω in section 22.

earth-bound mortals. ἄνδρες γηγενεῖς. The literal meaning is 'earth-born mortals', which is rather obscure here, although what is meant is probably not the somewhat pejorative 'primordial/primitive' type [qv. ἔστι ἐν τῇ ἀκροπόλι ταύτῃ Ἐρεχθέος τοῦ γηγενέος λεγομένου εἶναι νηός, Herodotus, 8.55; and ἄλλοι δὲ γηγενεῖς καὶ χαλκάσπιδας, Strabo, 10.3] nor even the 'earthy/rural' type [qv. μὴ μισήσῃς ἐπίπονον ἐργασίαν καὶ γεωργίαν ὑπὸ Ὑψίστου ἐκτισμένην, LXX, Sirach 7.15] but rather the contrast, mentioned in section 15, between those 'deathful of body' and the 'deathlessness of the inner mortal'; with a similar contrast occurring in Plato [οὐδὲν γὰρ γηγενὲς Ὀλυμπίων ἐντιμότερον ἀλλ᾽ ὁ περὶ ψυχῆς ἄλλως δοξάζων ἀγνοεῖ ὡς θαυμαστοῦ τούτου κτήματος ἀμελεῖ, Laws 727e]. Hence my suggestion of 'earth-bound', which is apposite considering what follows - οἱ μέθῃ καὶ ὕπνῳ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδε δωκότες.

sleepfulness. To translate ὕπνος here as simply 'sleep' is not particularly helpful to the reader, as what seems to be implied is not normal everyday 'sleep' - a necessity for all humans - since such normal healthy sleep is a strange companion for 'intoxicating liquor'. Regarding ὕπνος, Jebb in his commentary on *Antigone* in respect of ὕπνος ὁ παντογήρως (v.606) mentioned that "sleep, the renewer of vigour, could not be described as 'bringing old age to all'. Nor can the epithet be explained as 'enfeebling all', in the sense of 'subduing them'; nor, again, as 'attending on all, even to old age'," which led him to write that παντογήρως was probably corrupt and to suggest, as some others had done, an emendation.

The fact that sleep personified, as Hypnos/Somnus, is the brother of Death [qv. ἔνθ᾽ Ὕπνῳ ξύμβλητο κασιγνήτῳ Θανάτοιο, Iliad, 14.231] is also in favour of normal, healthy, sleep not being meant, as does what follows - θελγόμενοι ὕπνῳ ἀλόγῳ. Thus a possible alternative would be to interpret ὕπνος here somewhat metaphorically, either as a 'state of mind' (such as 'sleepwalking through life')

or as something akin to soporation (an underused English word, from the Latin) with the meaning here of 'an inclination or a tendency to sleep excessively or unnecessarily; to be inactive, drowsy, sleepful; disconnected from reality'. Hence my tentative interpretation - 'sleepfulness'.

unknowing of theos. ἀγνωσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ. Unknowing is a more suitable English word - given its meaning, usage (past and present) and given the context - than 'ignorance'

stop your drunkenness. παύσασθε δὲ κραιπαλῶντες. Literally, 'cease to be intoxicated'. It is interesting to compare this preaching to what Plutarch wrote about Demosthenes:

> ὀδυρομένου δὲ τοῦ Δημοσθένους πρὸς αὐτόν ὅτι πάντων φιλοπονώτατος ὢν τῶν λεγόντων καὶ μικροῦ δέων καταναλωκέναι τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀκμὴν εἰς τοῦτο χάριν οὐκ ἔχει πρὸς τὸν δῆμον, ἀλλὰ κραιπαλῶντες ἄνθρωποι ναῦται καὶ ἀμαθεῖς ἀκούονται καὶ κατέχουσι τὸ βῆμα, παρορᾶται δ᾽ αὐτός [Demosthenes, 7.1]
>
> To him, Demosthenes complained that although he was an industrious orator and had expended much bodily vigour in pursuing that duty, he was not favoured by the people who ignored him but listened to those who were intoxicated, the ignorant, and sailors, when they and their like held the floor.

28.

change your ways. μετανοήσατε. Not 'repent', which imposes a particular religious interpretation upon the text.

have kinship with the unknowing ones. συγκοινωνήσαντες τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ. Kinship in the sense of being 'kindred spirits', or 'fellow travellers'.

dark phaos. σκοτεινοῦ φωτός. An interesting phrase, lost in translation when φως is translated as 'light'. See the note on phaos in section 4.

29.

threw themselves down at my feet. ἑαυτοὺς πρὸ ποδῶν μου ῥίψαντε. A literal translation, although, given what follows, it seems unlikely that this is a metaphorical expression of their eagerness to learn. Indeed, this whole section seems rather at variance with the rest of the text - especially considering the following καθοδηγὸς ἐγενόμην τοῦ γένους - although perhaps 'the guide', having only just been informed of certain esoteric matters by Pœmandres, is here in this section somewhat obliquely revealing that he himself has yet (qv. section 25) to offer up "that eagerness which deceives; the arrogance of command; profane insolence."

became a guide to those of my kind. That is, not 'a guide to my race/mankind' but a guide to those who, seeking immortality, desire to undertake the journey through the seven spheres and thus are akin to - of the same type as - the guide.

informing them of the logoi. τοὺς λόγους διδάσκων. The logoi [plural of logos] are - qv. the note on θεωθῆναι in section 26 - the various apparent forms (or emanations) of the logos, and include the pneumal logos, the phaomal logos, and the logos kyrios, previously mentioned in the text. They are often considered to be how the logos is sometimes manifest to us, as mortals who are yet to begin or are yet to progress far along the septenary path toward immortality. Furthermore, those who are on the journey - following the way to theos - are also logoi.

logoi of sapientia. σοφίας λόγους. Something more than just 'words of [the] wisdom' is meant, especially as the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context, in this case of 'the opus mysterium'. The use here, in my translation, of the terms *logoi* and *sapientia* is intended - as with transliterations such as phaos - to cause the reader to pause and perhaps engender in them a certain curiosity as to what the terms may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply, and to thus (and hopefully) convey something about the original text.

celestial elixir. ἀμβροσίου ὕδατος. Literally, 'ambrosial water'; the food/drink that, in mythology, confers and maintains the immortality of the gods and chosen mortals.

30.

temperance of [the] psyche. τῆς ψυχῆς νῆψις. Again transliterating ψυχῆς, since the English word 'soul' imposes particular - religious/philosophical, and/or modern - meanings on the text, whereas it may well be used here in its classical/Hellenic sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; that is, as referring to that 'thing' (principle, or cause) which animates mortal beings making them 'alive', and which principle or cause was also personified as Psyche.

genuine insight. ἀληθινὴ ὅρασις. Cf. μεγίστην θέαν in section 27.

expression of the logos. It not clear how or in what form this manifestation of the logos occurs, although the context - of silence - might suggest that 'utterance' or 'speech' is not meant.

the logos of authority. τῆς αὐθεντίας λόγου. A similar expression occurs in section 3 also in reference to Pœmandres - τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς, the perceiveration of authority.

this revealing. I take the sense of ἀληθείας here to be not some abstract

(undefined, probably contentious and thus possibly undefinable) 'truth' but rather as a revealing of what is 'genuine' as distinct from what is mere 'appearance'. Here, literally, '*the* revealing' - of the nature of mortals, of the way to immortality, of logos and of theos.

31.

Agios o theos, father of all beings. ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων. For πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, see the note in section 22.

I have given, as an intimation, a transliteration of the first part, as these are doxologies, similar to the Kyrie eleison [Κύριε ἐλέησον], and much (if not all) of their numinous/sacred/mystical/esoteric quality and meaning are lost when they are translated into plain - or into archaic, KJV type - English. Although they are best read/recited in the original Greek, the Latin preserves much of the numinosity of these and other such doxologies. The Latin of the nine doxologies given here is:

> Sanctus deus pater universorum.
> Sanctus deus, cuius consilium ad finem deducitur a propriis potentiis.
> Sanctus deus, qui cognosci vult et cognoscitur a suis.
> Sanctus es, qui verbo constituisti entia omnia.
> Sanctus es, cuius universa natura imago nata est.
> Sanctus es, quem natura non formavit.
> Sanctus es, qui omni potentia es fortior.
> Sanctus es, qui omni excellentia es maior.
> Sanctus es, qui omnes superas laudes.

The Greek text is:

> ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων.
> ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς, οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων.
> ἅγιος ὁ θεός, ὃς γνωσθῆναι βούλεται καὶ γινώσκεται τοῖς ἰδίοις.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ λόγῳ συστησάμενος τὰ ὄντα.
> ἅγιος εἶ, οὗ πᾶσα φύσις εἰκὼν ἔφυ.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὃν ἡ φύσις οὐκ ἐμόρφωσεν.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ πάσης δυνάμεως ἰσχυρότερος.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ πάσης ὑπεροχῆς μείζων.
> ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ κρείττων τῶν ἐπαίνων.

ἅγιος ὁ approximates to 'Numinous is' [theos] - qv. the note on ἅγιος in section 5 - and ἅγιος εἶ to 'Numinous are' [you].

As to why there are nine doxologies, it may be (and probably is) just a coincidence, or it may reflect the 7+2 structure of the 7 causal aspects (the hebdomad) and the 2 'acausal' modes of being beyond them (qv. the note on δύναμις in section 26).

his own arts. I take the sense of δυνάμεων here to be not 'powers', forces (or something similar) but 'arts'; that is, those abilities, qualities, skills, and strengths - of the 'artisan-creator' - which are inherent in theos and express the very nature of theos. Abilities, qualities, skills, and strengths, which an artisan - with assistance and help and instruction from theos, the chief artisan - uses, for example, to 'fashion seven viziers' and the 'fine artisements of physis'. See sections 9-13 and the notes thereon.

whose disposition is to be recognized. γνωσθῆναι here with γινώσκεται is not exactly the straightforward '[who] wills/desires to be known' but rather the more subtle '[whose] disposition is to be recognized', and (i) disposition/inclination as an expression of the nature, the very being, of theos, (ii) to be recognized in the sense of to be perceived for who and what theos is, in essence, in very being. Those who so recognize theos - who thus understand and 'appreciate' theos and are cognizant of the type of Being theos is - are those who partake in some way, or who re-present or emanate, or who 'imitate' [qv. Thomas à Kempis, The Imitation of Christ] the nature of that Being; and which Being is therefore 'recognized/understood by those who are of his [type of] being,' although the Greek literally means "is recognized by his own".

Agios es. For ἅγιος εἶ. Combining the Latin with the Greek, for readability and expressiveness.

form all being. In both senses of the term 'form' - constitute, and form being into beings and which beings are or can be re-united with Being (theos) by logos.

you who engender all physis as eikon. The meaning and significance of this are often overlooked and often lost in translation. I have transliterated εἰκὼν as here it does not only mean what the English words 'image' or 'likeness' suggest or imply, but rather it is similar to what Maximus of Constantinople in his *Mystagogia* [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence.

According to the hermetic weltanschauung, as outlined by Pœmandres here, all physis - the being, nature, character, of beings - their essence beyond the form/appearence their being is or assumes or is perceived as - re-presents (manifests, is an eikon of) theos. That is, the physis of beings can be considered not only as an emanation of theos but as re-presenting his Being, his essence. To recognize this, to recognize theos, to be in communion with theos, to return to theos, and thus become immortal, there is the way up (anados) through the

seven spheres:

> Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait. [Section 25]

you whom the Physis did not morph. Given the construction - ὃν ἡ φύσις - I have capitalized Physis here (see sections 14 and 17]. By 'morph' is meant what the Greek term (ἐμόρφωσεν) implies, which is 'shape or transform' into some-thing-else, to give some-thing the 'semblance' of theos . That is, theos was, is, and remains, theos; there is no-thing resembling theos.

you who are mightier than all artifice. The artifice - the works, expedients, skill, manifestations, artisements, products, machinations, ingenuity, the 'domination', and the force - of others.

It is interesting to compare this might, the strength and power of theos, with what Epictetus writes about human strength in his *Discourses*:

> οὔτε τύραννος κωλύσει με θέλοντα οὔτε δεσπότης οὔτε οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν ἕνα οὔθ᾽ ὁ ἰσχυρότερος τὸν ἀσθενέστερον: τοῦτο γὰρ ἀκώλυτον δέδοται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἑκάστῳ [4.5]
>
> neither a tyrannos nor some Lord shall negate my intent; nor some crowd although I be just one; nor someone stronger although I be weaker, since such unhindrance is a gift, to everyone, from theos

wordful. The expressive term 'wordful' is more suitable here than 'speech', and also contrasts well with 'ineffable' and 'inexpressible'.

32.

the knowledge. For τῆς γνώσεως, although 'acquiring the knowledge' and 'the gnosis' are alternatives, so that with the latter it reads "I ask of you to grant that I am not foiled in the gnosis germane to our essence", with the phrase 'our essence' referring to the essence - οὐσία - of both mortals and theos.

favour. χάρις. A gift, favour, or kindness, here from theos [χάρις θεοῦ] and which type of gift is also mentioned in the New Testament (for example, Luke, 2.40). See also the quotation from Irenaeus in the note on *the father of all beings* in section 21.

the unknowing. In respect of 'unknowing' see the note in section 27.

who are your children. In respect of υἱὸς as the gender neutral 'child', rather than 'son', see the note on υἱὸς θεοῦ in section 6, and also the note on gender neutrality under ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in section 19.

share in [your] numinosity. For συναγιάζειν.

Ιερός Λόγος

An Esoteric Mythos

Tractate III

A Pagan And Esoteric Mythos

While the title - Ιερός Λόγος - of the third tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum is generally translated as either "A Sacred Discourse" or "A Holy Sermon", it would perhaps be more accurate to translate as *An Esoteric Mythos* given (i) that it describes a numinous theogony of the kind recounted to initiates of the mystery traditions of ancient Greece, and thus recounts a mythos that pre-dates the Biblical story of Genesis, as given in the Septuagint (LXX), by centuries, and (ii) that ἱερός λόγος/ἱεροί λόγοι (an esoteric mythos/esoteric mythoi) were phrases often used to describe such mystery traditions, both Greek and Greco-Egyptian, as, for example, by Herodotus {1}.

For it is possible that the often-stated belief of the tractate being influenced by the story recounted in LXX is incorrect, and that whatever similarities there are between the text of the tractate and Greek text of the Biblical story of Genesis might be due either to the scribe of what was a previously esoteric aural tradition being familiar with LXX or some parts of it and borrowing a particular word or words to try and express an aspect of that paganus tradition (an opinion held by the Christian Byzantine historian Mikhael Psellus, d. 1078 CE), or to the Biblical story of creation itself being influenced by a more ancient Greek mythos or mythoi, just as it was influenced by similar, more ancient, mythoi from Sumeria and elsewhere. In addition, the overt polytheism of the tractate, and Greek concepts such as φύσις (physis) and Πνεῦμα (pneuma) {2}, are at odds with such influence and with that Biblical story.

Furthermore, far from it being (again, as has often been previously believed) a very corrupt, or overwritten text, the Ιερός Λόγος most probably reasonably represents, like the Pymander tractate, a pagan metaphysical weltanschauung germane to the period of its composition and one which is based upon or recounts an earlier, and most probably aural, tradition. Furthermore, as Wildberg has suggested, the text might simply incorporate some marginalia {3}.

Such an esoteric mythos, as recorded in the Ιερός Λόγος hermetic tractate, had - like the Biblical Genesis story - antecedents. Such as

> οἳ Γῆς ἐξεγένοντο καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος
>
> those who came-into-being from Gaia and the starry heavens {4}

from the theogony of Hesiod (106) - written c. 700 BCE - of which there is a remarkably similar expression in funerary inscriptions, from some four centuries later (c. 300 BCE) in Pharsalos, Thessalyon,

> Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστ<ερόεντος>
>
> I am a child of Gaia and the starry heavens

and on a gold funerary tablet (c. 200 BCE) found at Eleutherna, Crete,

> ΓΑΣ ΥΙΟΣ ΕΙΜΙ ΚΑΙ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΥ ΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΟΣ
>
> Γᾶς υἱός ἠμι καὶ �Ωρανῶ ἀστερόεντος {5}

and also in a, purportedly Orphic, religious text (the Derveni papyrus) dating from c. 330 BCE {6} which contains the Hesiodian phrase οἳ Διὸς ἐξεγένοντο [those who came-into-being from Zeus]. Thus, it is part of this ancient esoteric mythos, and/or its antecedents, that may well be echoed in LXX (Genesis, 1:1), written centuries later:

> Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν
>
> In the beginning, Theos produced the heavens and the Earth {7}

and which Biblical text is, interestingly, given by Aquila - qv. the Hexapla {8} - as:

> Ἐν κεφαλαίῳ ἔκτισεν ὁ Θεὸς σὺν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ σὺν τὴν γῆν
>
> As foundation, Theos formed the heavens and the Earth {9}

It is thus my view that the third tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum is a valuable hermetic document, presenting as it does - probably after centuries of aural transmission as befitted ἱεροί λόγοι - an esoteric weltanschauung that pre-dates, and thus is independent of, not only Christianity but also of the myths, stories, and theology, manifest in the Old Testament.

Understood thus, the Ιερός Λόγος tractate is the story of genesis according to an ancient pagan, and esoteric, weltanschauung; a text in all probability older than the other texts in the Corpus Hermeticum; and a text which the author of the Pœmandres tractate might well have been familiar with, as a reading of both texts indicates.

Commentary, Translation, and Text

The references in the commentary here to the *Pœmandres* tractate are to my translation of and commentary on that text for I have retained the transliterations, and some of the English phrases, used and explained there, such as physis, phaos, theos. I have also, as there, occasionally used some particular, or some quite obscure English words - or forms of them - in order to try and elucidate the meaning of the text or to avoid using, in what is a metaphysical text, some commonplace term with various connotations (contemporary or otherwise) that may lead to a misunderstanding of the text. I have endeavoured to explain such obscure words in the commentary. There is thus in this translation, as in my translation of *Pœmandres*, a certain technical - or rather, esoteric - vocabulary.

Purely for readability, I have arranged the translation into (non-poetic) verses rather than long paragraphs. All translations in the commentary and notes are mine.

Notes

{1} (a) ἔστι λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ ἱρὸς λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 48, s3. (b) ἔστι ἱρὸς περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 62, s2. (c) ἔστι δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν ἱρὸς λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 81, s2.

{2} In ἱεροί λόγοι and in many hermetic texts, φύσις suggests something more than what the terms 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denote. That is - qv. the Pœmandres tractate (see footnote 8) - it suggests to "know what is real" and to apprehend the physis of those real things - νοῆσαι τὴν τού των φύσιν; to thus have an understanding of ontology. For physis is a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being.

In respect of pnuema, qv. DeWitt Burton: *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918)

{3} Christian Wildberg: *The Genesis of a Genesis: Corpus Hermeticum, Tractate III*, in Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz: *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (pp.139-166). *Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum*, 155. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2013.

{4} Pedantically, a more accurate translation of ἀστερόεντος would be stelliferous - hence the 'stelliferous heavens' - but 'starry heavens' is far more poetic.

{5} Interestingly, some similar inscriptions - such as another one from Eleutherna - are gender neutral and simply say ΓΥΑΤΗΡΚΑΙΩΡΑΝΩΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΟΣ. That is, 'of Gaia and the starry heavens'.

{6} Bernabé, Alberto, and Francesc Casadesús. *Orfeo y la tradición órfica: Un reencuentro*. Madrid: Akal. 2008.

{7} Although I give here, for Ἐν ἀρχῇ, the conventional 'In the beginning', I am inclined to prefer 'In primacy' (the first thing/principle/origin of; cf. Anaximander, where there is also mention of the heavens and 'the world' or cosmos: πρῶτος τοῦτο τοὔνομα κομίσας τῆς ἀρχῆς λέγει δ' αὐτὴν μήτε ὕδωρ μήτε ἄλλο τι τῶν καλουμένων εἶναι στοιχείων ἀλλ' ἑτέραν τινὰ φύσιν ἄπειρον ἐξ ἧς ἅπαντας γίνεσθαι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς κόσμους. Simplicius, *Physics*, 24:13-21).

An alternative, suggested by the Greek text of Aquila of Genesis 1:1, would be "As foundation, Theos produced..." Furthermore, instead of the 'creavit' of the Latin Vulgate, the older Vetus Latina has 'In principio *fecit* deus caelum et terram.'

{8} Frederick Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quæ Supersunt*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1875.

{9} Literally, "In foundation, Theos built/produced..."

The Latin of Jermone - who, according to certain sources, was acquainted with the text of Aquila - is *in principio creavit Deus caelum et terram*.

Translation

[1] The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis.
The origin of what exists is theos, who is Perceiveration and Physis and Substance:
The sapientia which is a revealing of all beings.
For the numinal is the origin: physis, vigour, incumbency, accomplishment, renewance.

In the Abyss, an unmeasurable darkness, and, by the influence of the numen,
Water and delicate apprehending Pnuema, there, in Kaos.
Then, a numinous phaos arose and, from beneath the sandy ground,
Parsements coagulated from fluidic essence.
And all of the deities <particularize> seedful physis.

[2] With all beings unformed and not yet presenced,
What was lightsome was separated out, upward
And what was burdensome set in fluidic ground
With all defined through Fire, then elevated - and conveyed - by Pneuma.
Thus the heavens became perceivable in seven spheres,
Deities represented in the arrangements of the stars,
With the outer revolving in the æther, and circulating by the Pnuema of theos.

[3] Through their distinguishing influence, each deity did what was assigned to them
So that there came-into-being beasts four-footed and slithering
And those dwelling in water and those that fly,
And harvestable seeds and pastures and all kinds of verdant flowers,
<Seeding within> the semination of rebirth.
Thus can the offspring of mortals apprehend the works of theos, a living witness of physis,
So that the multitude of mortals can husband all that is below the heavens,
Appreciate honour, and propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning.

Thus, every psyche - embodied in flesh - can
By the mirificence of the circumferent deities coursing the heavens
Apprehend the heavens, and honour, and physis presenced, and the works of theos;
Can understand divine influence as wyrdful change
And thus, regarding what is good and what is bad, discover all the arts of honour.

[4] For this is the commencement of their living, of such learning
As is - by circumferent deities coursing - wyrdful, and the discoagulation of it,
For the great earthly artialized memorials they have left
Will, with the passing of the seasons, fade
Just as, for the generations of psyche-bearing flesh and fruitful seeds and artisements,
There will be renewance through incumbency, renewance through the divine
And by the circumferent coursing of Physis.

The divine is all of that mixion: renewance of the cosmic order through Physis
For Physis is presenced in the divine.

°°°

Commentary

1.

The numen of all beings is theos. Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς. The sense of δόξα here, especially given the following mention of θεῖος and φύσις, is of immanence and of transcendent sublimity, encompassing both (i) the interpretation given to the word in LXX and the New Testament, of a divine glory (qv. Exodus 16:10, Matthew 25:31, and Luke 2:9) and thus of what is considered to be - that is, is outwardly manifest as - glorious, or splendid, as in Matthew 4:8, a sense well-expressed in the Latin of Jerome: iterum adsumit eum diabolus in montem excelsum valde et ostendit ei omnia regna mundi et gloriam eorum, and (ii) the classical, more personal sense, of honour, and reputation or repute, the latter as for example referenced by Boethius: Unde non iniuria tragicus exclamat: Ὦ δόξα, δόξα, μυρίοισι δὴ βροτῶν οὐδὲν γεγῶσι βίοτον ὤγκωσας μέγαν (Book III, vi).

Hence I have opted for 'numen', rather than the usual 'splendour' or 'glory' which do not, in my view given their modern connotations and common usage, express the sense of the Greek; with the meaning of 'numen' here being expressed by what follows: "numinal and of numinal physis", where by numinal - in this ἱερός λόγος - is meant divine not in the specific sense of a monotheistic and Biblical (a masculous) God but in the more general sense of pertaining to a deity or deities, male or female, as in a paganus (and not necessarily patriarchal) polytheism.

In this paganus context, the numinous is therefore what is, or what manifests (presences) or can manifest or remind us of (what can reveal) what is regarded or understood as sacred, numinal, sublime, awe-inspiring, beautiful, noble, esoteric, beyond the mundane, and beyond our ability, as mortals, to control. Thus, in terms of ἱεροί λόγοι in general, the numen reminds us of 'the natural order of things' (the physis of theos, of theoi, of Nature and of the heavens), reminds us of our own physis, and thus of our duties and responsibilities as mortals (especially in relation to deities) and thence the need to avoid hubris.

In respect of hubris, Hesiod, in Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι [Works and Days], vv 213-218, wrote:

> σὺ δ᾽ ἄκουε δίκης, μηδ᾽ ὕβριν ὄφελλε:

ὕβρις γάρ τε κακὴ δειλῷ βροτῷ: οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλὸς
215 ῥηιδίως φερέμεν δύναται, βαρύθει δέ θ᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς
ἐγκύρσας ἄτῃσιν: ὁδὸς δ᾽ ἑτέρηφι παρελθεῖν
κρείσσων ἐς τὰ δίκαια: Δίκη δ᾽ ὑπὲρ Ὕβριος ἴσχει
ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα: παθὼν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω

You should listen to [the goddess] Fairness and not oblige Hubris
Since Hubris harms unfortunate mortals while even the more fortunate
Are not equal to carrying that heavy a burden, meeting as they do with Mischief.
The best path to take is the opposite one: that of honour
For, in the end, Fairness is above Hubris
Which is something the young come to learn from adversity.

Notes:

a. δίκη. The goddess of Fairness/Justice/Judgement, and – importantly – of Tradition (Ancestral Custom). In Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι, as in Θεογονία (Theogony), Hesiod is recounting and explaining part of that tradition, one important aspect of which tradition is understanding the relation between the gods and mortals. Given both the antiquity of the text and the context, ‘Fairness’ – as the name of the goddess – is, in my view, more appropriate than the now common appellation ‘Justice’, considering the modern (oft times impersonal) connotations of the word ‘justice’.
b. Mischief. The sense of ἄτῃσιν here is not of ‘delusion’ nor of ‘calamities’, per se, but rather of encountering that which or those whom (such as the goddess of mischief, Ἄτη) can bring mischief or misfortune into the ‘fortunate life’ of a ‘fortunate mortal’, and which encounters are, according to classical tradition, considered as having been instigated by the gods. Hence, of course, why Sophocles [Antigone, 1337-8] wrote ὡς πεπρωμένης οὐκ ἔστι θνητοῖς συμφορᾶς ἀπαλλαγή (mortals cannot be delivered from the misfortunes of their fate).
c. δίκαιος. Honour expresses the sense that is meant: of being fair; capable of doing the decent thing; of dutifully observing ancestral customs. A reasonable alternative for ‘honour’ would thus be ‘decency’, both preferable to words such as ‘just’ and ‘justice’ which are not only too impersonal but have too many inappropriate modern connotations.
d. νήπιος. Literal – ‘young’, ‘uncultured’ (i.e. un-schooled, un-educated in the ways of ancestral custom) – rather than metaphorical (‘foolish’, ignorant).

Theos. θεὸς. As with the Pœmandres tractate, I have opted for a transliteration, for the Biblical 'God' is not what is meant here, given the title of the tractate and the content, while the word 'god' (singular, lower case) now has certain connotations (some of which are theological) not always relevant to ancient Greek deities. In terms of theos, what is most probably meant here - cf. Hesiod's Theogony - is the, or a, prime, first, or primordial deity (such as Οὐρανός) from whence came-into-being the other Greek deities, including Zeus (cf. the use of πρῶτον by Plato in *Timeas,* 69b).

Thus, in respect of this tractate, I translate θεοὶ not as 'gods' but as 'deities' in the hope of providing a more balanced view of this particular ancient paganus text.

Physis. As in my translation of Pœmandres tractate I have given a transliteration to suggest, as I wrote there, "something more than what 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denotes. That is, to know what is real and apprehend the physis of those real things - νοῆσαι τὴν τού των φύσιν; to discern the physis, the true nature, of beings. That is, to have an understanding of ontology; for physis is a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being".

Occasionally I have capitalized physis, when the context merits it, such as when the physis of what we term Nature is meant or implied; or when - as here at the beginning - it is an attribute of theos.

τῶν ὄντων. What is real/what exists (Reality/Existence) - qv. the beginning of the Pœmandres tractate, and my commentary thereon.

νοῦς. *Perceiveration,* not 'mind', qv. Pœmandres 2.

substance. ὕλη, the *materia* of 'things' and living beings - contrasted with οὐσία, essence. qv. Pœmandres 10.

sapientia. σοφία. qv. Pœmandres 29.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. In the sense of vitality and vigorous activity. See my note on ἡ εἱμαρμένη, Pœmandres 15.

incumbency. Often personified as Ἀνάγκης, the primordial goddess of incumbency; that is, of wyrd: of that which is beyond, and the origin of, what we often describe as our Fate as a mortal being. To render ἀνάγκη here somewhat blandly as 'necessity' is to miss both the subtle esotericism of an ἱερός λόγος and what Empedocles wrote:

> ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,
> ἀίδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὅρκοις·
> εὖτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μιήνηι,
> νείκεῖ θ' ὅς κε ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσηι,
> δαίμονες οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο,
> τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
> φυομένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἴδεα θνητῶν
> ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
> αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
> πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς
> ἠελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
> ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
> τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγάς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
> Νείκεϊ μαινομένωι πίσυνος.

There exists an insight by Ananke, an ancient resolution
Of the gods, immutable and sealed by vows,
Regarding when one of the daimons - those whose allotted portion of life is long -
Has their own hands stained from murder
Or who, once having sworn an oath, because of some feud breaks that oath.
For they shall for ten thousand tripled seasons wander away from the beautified,
Begotten during that period in all manner of mortal form
And exchanging during that voyage one vexation for another:

The fierce Ætherials chase them to the Sea,
The Sea spits them out onto dusty ground,
Gaia hurls them to the burning light of the Sun
Who flings them back to those swirling Ætherials.
Moved from one to the other, all detest them.

I am one of those, a vagabond in exile from the gods
Who has to rely on strongful Disagreement.

Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Diels-Kranz, B115

Notes:

νεῖκος (disagreement) is - according to what we can adduce of the philosophy of Empedocles from the fragments of his writings that we possess - a fundamental principle, and one understood in relation to another fundamental principle, Φιλότης, expressive as they both are of the logos (λόγος) by which we can possibly apprehend the workings of the cosmic order (κόσμος). However, the common translations - of 'strife' and 'love' respectively - do not in my view express what Empedocles seems to be trying to convey, which is 'disagreement' and 'fellowship' (a communal or kindred working-together in pursuit of a common interest or goal). For while disagreement sometimes disrupts fellowship, it is often necessary as the genesis of productive change.

Thus, just as Odysseus had to rely on the support of Athena, who disagreed with how Poseidon treated Odysseus, so does the 'vagabond in exile from the deities/the gods' have to rely on disagreements among the immortals to end their own exile.

Abyss. ἄβυσσος.

A delicate apprehending pneuma. πνεῦμα λεπτὸν νοερόν. In respect of νοερός, the sense here is not 'intelligent'/'intelligence' - as in "quickness or superiority of understanding, sagacity", etcetera - but rather of self-awareness; that is, of possessing a faculty to perceive, comprehend, and to rationally understand the external world. Which is why I have opted for 'apprehending'.

influence. δύναμις. Not here 'force' or 'power' per se but rather the influence arising from, inherent in, the numen by virtue of the numinosity of theos. The kind of influence which can nurture a 'delicate apprehending pneuma'.

Kaos. χάος.

numinous phaos. φῶς ἅγιον. Regarding the transliteration of φῶς - using the Homeric φάος (phaos) - see my commentary on Pœmandres 4; and regarding ἅγιος as 'numinous', rather than the conventional 'holy' or 'sacred', refer to the commentary on Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς above, and especially the note on the duality of the numinous in pagan weltanschauungen in my commentary on Pœmandres 5.

beneath (that) sandy ground. ὕφ’ ἄμμῳ. Regarding ἄμμος, qv. Xenophon, *Apomnemoneumata* 3.3.6 - πότερον ἐπάγειν τοὺς πολεμίους ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον κελεύσεις - for the reference, in context, seems to be to sandy ground or to sea marshes or, and perhaps more metaphorically, to waterlogged (boggy, unsuitable) land in general, and not necessarily (as some have theorized) to the sandy places and sand dunes in North Africa (such as in Egypt and Libya) as mentioned in Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 3.50.2, τὴν δὲ χρόαν ἄμμῳ παραπλησίαν ἔχουσι.

It is possible that ἄμμος, in regard to the ἱερός λόγος recounted in this tractate, had some esoteric or metaphysical meaning, now lost.

flowing (as in fluidic). The sense of ὑγρός here and in Pœmandres 4.

essence. οὐσίας. qv. Pœmandres 14.

parsements. For στοιχεῖον. qv. Pœmandres 8.

Coagulated. πήγνυμι.

<particularize>. As in 'distinguish between'. The MSS have καταδιερῶσι. Various emendations have been proposed, including καταδιορῶσι, while Wildberg has suggested that "and all of the deities..." - καὶ θεοὶ πάντες καταδιορῶσι - was originally marginalia.

2.

With all beings unformed and not yet presenced. ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἁπάντων καὶ ἀκατασκευάστων. An interesting phrase, with the English term 'presenced' perhaps expressing at least something of its philosophical implications derived as that term is from the noun 'presencing' (dating from c.1637) and meaning as it does "the action or process of making some-thing manifest and/or present and/or established." For, as the tractate goes to explain, what becomes formed and manifest are 'the seven-fold heavens' and deities, manifest as stars, within them.

In respect of ἀκατασκευάστων, while some commentators have pointed to Genesis 1:2 - ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, 'and the Earth was unperceived and formless' - as a parallel, σκευαστῶν occurs in Aristotle's Metaphysics (5.1013b) in reference to the classification of differences in

causation, such as whether or not something is 'manufactured', as in produced by an artisan (such as a statue, ἀνδριάς) or by some other means, and, regardless, πάντα ὅθεν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς μεταβολῆς ἢ στάσεως. Interestingly, in his commentary on the Metaphysics, Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Apposuit autem cum insit, ad differentiam privationis et contrarii: nam statua quidem fit ex aere, quod inest statuae iam factae; fit etiam ex infigurato, quod quidem non inest statuae iam factae. Unde aes est causa statuae, non autem infiguratum, cum sit principium per accidens tantum" (Commentaria, *In libros Physicorum*, 2, Lectio 5).

Thus, there is initially a 'privation of form', unformed being, which is then formed - as a statue from unshaped bronze - by theos as artisan-creator, and thus a possible metaphysical parallel in Pœmandres, such as in 31: πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων... οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων...ὁ λόγῳ συστησάμενος τὰ ὄντα [father of all beings...whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts...you who by logos form all being]. It is also interesting to compare all this with Plato's description in the Timaeus, 69b-c, in which his expression καὶ τῶν μὲν θείων αὐτὸς γίγνεται δημιουργός is noteworthy.

lightsome/burdensome. Used in preference to the less descriptive, ubiquitous, 'light' and 'heavy'. The whole passage is somewhat obscure, but if ἀποδιωρίσθη τὰ ἐλαφρὰ εἰς ὕψος was a metaphorical 'separating out' of what is 'light' from what is not light - rather than what is 'light' being somehow sent upwards, 'to the heights', or 'separated off upwards' - and, in particular, if ἀνακρεμασθέντων πνεύματι ὀχεῖσθαι was understood as referring to what - having been defined by, wrought in form through Fire, as bronze and iron are formed and shaped through fire - becomes elevated and conveyed by Pneuma, then philosophically it makes sense, especially given the Greek concept of the psyche (the immortal essence, or 'spirit') of sentient beings being conveyed through life and beyond (and presenced) by (or as) Pnuema, or by our mortal body (as mentioned by Plato).

seven spheres. qv. Pœmandres 9, 17, etcetera.

the outer revolving in the æther. The text is rather obscure, and one assumes 'the outer' refers to the outermost, the peripheral, sphere. Furthermore, I have here translated ἀήρ not as 'air' but as æther since ordinary, terrestrial, air is most certainly not what is meant and the ambiguous term æther (understood classically or otherwise) is suggestive of what may be meant. For whether ἀήρ here - as æther - refers to the fifth element as mentioned by Plato in *Epinomis* (981c) - πέντε οὖν ὄντων τῶν σωμάτων, πῦρ χρὴ φάναι καὶ ὕδωρ εἶναι καὶ τρίτον ἀέρα, τέταρτον δὲ γῆν, πέμπτον δὲ αἰθέρα - or whether it refers to a more mystical or esoteric, or hypothesized, substance that formed part of ἱεροί λόγοι, is an interesting question.

3.

So that there came-into-being beasts four-footed. cf. Pœmandres 11.

<Seeding within them> the semination of rebirth. τὸ σπέρμα τῆς παλιγγενεσίας ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐσπερμολόγουν. Although the text is obscure and has been variously emended by Reitzenstein, Nock, et al, the presumption is that this rebirth - or, alternatively, and more probably, this 'regeneration through offspring' - refers either to the deities themselves or (more probably) to the previously described living things which the deities brought-into-being.

My view is that what seems to be suggested by the text is that the deities seeded within living beings (human, animal, and otherwise) the ability to regenerate through offspring.

Thus can the offspring of mortals apprehend the works of theos. There is an interesting parallel here with some Quranic ayat, such as:

> "The creations in Heaven and Earth, the very change of Night to Day, are Signs [from Allah] for those gifted with understanding, those who whether sitting, standing or reclining on their sides, give praise to Allah and who frequently recall those creations in Heaven and Earth." 3:189-191 Interpretation of Meaning

mortals should husband all that is below the heavens. I take the sense of δεσποτεία here - given what precedes and what follows - to suggest husbandry (of Earth) rather than to mean power in the sense of mastery (as in over a slave).

appreciate honour. Given the context - mortals, theos, deities, physis - I take the meaning of ἀγαθός here to refer to what is personal, not to some abstract concept of 'good'. Hence the personal virtue of honour; to behaving, to living, in a noble, a valourous, way, as opposed to being dishonourable or cowardly; a contrast mentioned in the Iliad, Book 17, 631-2: τῶν μὲν γὰρ πάντων βέλε᾽ ἄπτεται ὅς τις ἀφήῃ ἠ κακὸς ἠ ἀγαθός [whether hurled by someone honourable or dishonourable, all of the missiles still strike their target].

The personal sense of ἀγαθός here also has the virtue of making what follows, at the end of section 3 - γνῶναι ἀγαθῶν καὶ φαύλων καὶ πᾶσαν ἀγαθῶν δαιδαλουργίαν εὑρεῖν - somewhat more understandable. Hence, a discovery or a learning of "all the arts of honour" in contrast to discovering "every artful workmanship of good things".

propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning. qv. Pœmandres 18.

a living witness of physis. The sense of ἐνεργοῦσαν here is poetically metaphysical, not literal. Hence a "living witness of physis" rather than an 'active' or 'working' one. An alternative would be 'presenced', suggested by Aristotle's Metaphysics: ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ τῆς κατὰ κίνησιν λεγομένης δυνάμεως

εἴρηται περὶ ἐνεργείας διορίσωμεν τί τέ ἐστιν ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ ποῖόν τι... ἔστι δὴ ἐνέργεια τὸ ὑπάρχειν τὸ πρᾶγμα μὴ οὕτως ὥσπερ λέγομεν δυνάμει. (1048a)

with every psyche, embodied in flesh. The text following this is (to the end of the tractate) is often so obscure (or corrupted) that any interpretation is tentative. Wildberg's suggestion that διὰ δρομήματος θεῶν ἐγκυκλίων τερασπορίας...καὶ φύσεως ἐνεργείας is marginalia, while interesting, does little to alleviate the obscurity of this part of the text.

mirificence. This rather neglected English word - from the post-classical Latin word mirificentia: the action or the fact of doing what is or appears to be wondrous, portentous - in my view expresses the meaning implicit in διὰ δρομήματος θεῶν ἐγκυκλίων τερασπορίας εἰς κατοπτείαν οὐρανοῦ somewhat better than such turns of phrase as "the wonder-working course of..," or "by portent-sowings of the course of..."

presenced. qv. the previous note on ἐνεργοῦσαν.

understand divine influence as wyrdful change. γνῶσιν θείας δυνάμεως μοίρης ὀχλουμένης. This exceptionally obscure Greek phrase has been interpreted in a variety of ways, with my interpretation just one among many. 'Wyrd' rather than 'fate', given how the term 'fate' has acquired contemporary meanings not relevant here.

all the arts of honour. Less poetically, more literally, "the skills of all the honourable arts".

4.

As is - by circumferent deities coursing - wyrdful. This is open to three different interpretations, as perhaps was intended. First, that it is the deities themselves who determine the wyrd of mortals. Second, that a person's wyrd can be discovered - learned, possibly predicted - by astrological means; that is, by understanding the movement of the planets and the stars associated with the deities since the "deities are represented in the arrangements of the stars". Third, given the septenary nature of the deities - for "the heavens are perceivable in seven spheres" - one's wyrd can be discovered by an esoteric and septenary anados as described in the Pœmandres tractate.

artialized. From verb artize - qv. 'artisements' below - and meaning here produced or constructed by an artisan or skilled craftsman.

which the passing of the seasons will fade. Not χρόνος as some abstract 'time' measured by some human manufactured mechanism such as a clock (a relatively recent concept, in terms of aeonic ἱεροί λόγοι), but rather measured by the passing of the seasons, as determined - for example - by the appearance and the disappearence in the night sky of certain constellations and stars:

θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ τῶνδ᾽ ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων
φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μῆκος, ἣν κοιμώμενος
στέγαις Ἀτρειδῶν ἄγκαθεν, κυνὸς δίκην,
ἄστρων κάτοιδα νυκτέρων ὁμήγυριν,
καὶ τοὺς φέροντας χεῖμα καὶ θέρος βροτοῖς
λαμπροὺς δυνάστας, ἐμπρέποντας αἰθέρι
ἀστέρας, ὅταν φθίνωσιν, ἀντολάς τε τῶν.

Again I have asked the gods to deliver me from this toil,
This vigil a year in length, where I repose
On Atreidae's roof on my arms, as is the custom with dogs
Looking toward the nightly assembly of constellations
And they who bring to mortals the storm-season and the summer:
Those radiant sovereigns, distinguished in the heavens
As stars when they come forth or pass away.

(Agamemnon, 1-7)

artisements. The products of the skilled work of the artisan and the artist; their artisanship; cf. the 16th century English verb artize: to exercise a skill, to pursue a skilled occupation such as that of an artisan.

the circumferent coursing of Physis. Given the context, I have - as at the beginning of the text - capitalized physis here.

mixion. Alternate (old) spelling of mixtion, meaning the condition or state of being mixed, melded, compounded, combined.

Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς

Chaldron Or Monas

Tractate IV

Introduction

The title given to the fourth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς, requires some consideration if it is to be translated without using English words that have, in the centuries since the text was written, acquired meanings which are not or which may not be relevant to or representative of the metaphysics, and the cosmogony, of such an ancient text; with an injudicious choice of words more often than not resulting in the modern reader projecting certain interpretations upon the text, as might be the case in translating, without some comment, κρατῆρ as 'basin', cup, or 'mixing bowl', μονάς as 'monad', and Τάτ as Thoth.

In respect of κρατῆρ, a more appropriate - and certainly more subtle - translation, given the esoteric nature and antiquity of the text, would be chaldron (an alternative spelling of 'cauldron'), since basin, cup, and 'mixing bowl' are not only too prosaic but also do not conjure the appropriate archetypal imagery: of the primal artisan-creator coagulating and mixing primal substances - qv. tractate III, Ιερός Λόγος - to produce, to bring-into-being by means of Logos, the cosmic order and thence mortal beings.

In respect of μονάς, the transliteration monas would be more appropriate - and certainly more subtle - than 'monad' given that the term monad is now so often associated with such weltanschauungen as those termed Pythagorean/neo-Pythagorean and Gnostic, an association which may or may not be relevant here. Furthermore, monas has a long and interesting esoteric usage, including (somewhat recently) by John Dee in his *Testamentum Johannis Dee Philosophi*

summi ad Johannem Gwynn, transmissum 1568 - a text included (on page 334) in Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, Containing Severall Poeticall Pieces of our Famous English philosophers, who have written the Hermetique Mysteries in their owne Ancient Language,* published in London in 1652 - who wrote "our Monas trewe thus use by natures Law, both binde and lewse", and who also entitled one of his works *Monas Hieroglyphica* (Antwerp, 1564), in which work he described (in Theorem XVIII) a septenary system somewhat similar to that of the Poemandres tractate:

In respect of Τάτ, while there is no disputing that Thoth is meant, what may or may not be implied by the name Thoth is whether or not there is a primarily Egyptian genesis for the metaphysics and the cosmogony of this particular tractate. For what does 'Egyptian' mean in the context of the Corpus Hermeticum, written when Egypt was a post-Ptolemaic Roman province where Hellenism still thrived? That is, is the text propounding a metaphysics and a cosmogony primarily redolent of indigenous, pre-Alexandrian, times, with Hermes Trismegistus simply a Hellenic name for the ancient Dynastic deity Thoth, and thus with the Greek Hermes possibly being a son of that ancient Egyptian deity? Or is the text redolent of a classical metaphysics and a cosmogony; or of a Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony; or of some syncretism of Egyptian (pre-Alexandrian) weltanschauungen with Hellenic mysticism? Or has the author (or authors) of Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς simply used the name of an ancient deity - Thoth - in order to appeal to an audience of Hellenized Egyptians, or Greeks/Romans dwelling in Egypt, or because it seemed to add some esoteric gravitas to the text? Or, as the title might be taken to imply - of Hermes *to* Thoth - is it a text intended to inform Egyptians (Hellenized or expatriate Greeks/Romans, or otherwise) about Greek/Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony, with Thoth thus regarded, symbolically, esoterically, or otherwise, as the son of the Greek divinity Hermes?

In this matter, I incline toward the view - based on some forty years of study of the Corpus Hermeticum and similar mystical and esoteric texts, classical, Hellenic, medieval, Arabic and otherwise - that what is imparted in this tractate, as with the Poemandres and Ιερός Λόγος, is primarily a mystical, and - for centuries - aural, Greek tradition, albeit one possibly influenced, over time and in some degree, by the metaphysical speculations of later philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. That is, that in Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς and Ιερός Λόγος and Ποιμάνδρης, we have an intimation of the metaphysics and the cosmogony taught to initiates of that (or those) ancient and aural and paganus Greek mystical tradition(s) mentioned by writers such as Herodotus. And an intimation that is not - a few borrowed illustrative terms notwithstanding - in any significant and metaphysical manner deriving from or influenced by Biblical stories or by early Christian theology or by indigenous Egyptian culture. In the matter of a paganus Greek mystical tradition, the opening of the fourth tractate is, metaphysically, very interesting:

> Επειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ ὥστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα
>
> Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos, you should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, as One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

For it is incorrect and misleading to write about those three tractates - and some other tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum - as being in any way indigenously Egyptian. Rather, their genesis - the tradition they represented - was the Greek culture of post-Alexandrian Egypt, a cultural influence so evident in the numerous papyri found in places such as Oxyrhynchus, containing as such papyri do verses from Homer, Sappho, Menander, Sophocles, and other Greek authors.

Commentary, Translation, and Text

The references in the commentary here to the *Pœmandres* and Ιερός Λόγος are to my translations of and commentary on those texts for, as I mentioned in my Ιερός Λόγος,

> I have retained the transliterations, and some of the English phrases, used and explained there, such as physis, phaos, theos. I have also, as there, occasionally used some particular, or some quite obscure English words - or forms of them - in order to try and elucidate the meaning of the text or to avoid using, in what is a metaphysical text, some commonplace term with various connotations (contemporary or otherwise) that may lead to a misunderstanding of the text. I have endeavoured to explain such obscure words in the commentary. There is thus in this translation, as in my translation of *Pœmandres*, a certain technical - or rather, esoteric - vocabulary.

As with my Ιερός Λόγος, I have here, purely for readability, arranged the translation into (non-poetic) verses rather than long paragraphs. All translations in the commentary are mine.

Translation

[1] Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos
You should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being,
As One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

That Being has no body that can be touched or seen or measured or which is separable
Or which is similar to any other body: not of Fire or Water or of Pneuma
Even though all such things are from that Being.
Since that Being is honourable, the desire was to entrust solely to that Being
Such a cosmic order on Earth:

[2] A cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings,
For just as the ever-living cosmic order had an advantage over them
So did they have an advantage over other living beings in their cosmos
Because of Logos and Perceiverance.
Thus did mortals perceive the works of theos, admire them,
Gaining knowledge of their creator.

[3] Thus, Thoth, to all mortals logos was assigned, but not perceiverance
Even though there was no ill-will, for such ill-will arrives not from there
But below, associated with mortals whose Psyche does not convey Perceiverance.

On account of what, father, did theos not assign perceiverance to all?

Son, the desire was to position it half-way between those psyches, as a reward.

[4] Where, then, was it placed?

In that large repleteful chaldron which was dispatched down
With an envoy assigned to declaim to the hearts of mortals:
If you have strength enough, immerse yourself in the chaldron
Should you accept you can ascend -
Having discovered how you came-into-being -
To the one who dispatched down that chaldron.

The many who understood that declaration and were immersive with perceiveration
Gained a certain knowledge, becoming more complete mortals
Through having received the perceiveration
While the many who misunderstood that declaration,
Having logos without the addition of perceiveration,
Are unperceptive regarding how and why they came-into-being.

[5] For they have the alertness similar to that of unthinking animals
And, having an angry and restive disposition,
Have no respect for what is really valuable
But instead follow bodily pleasures and their own desires
Confident as they are that mortals were born for such things.

And yet, Thoth, those who parten to that gift from theos become,
When set against their deeds, immortal instead of mortal

For they with their perceiverance apprehend the Earthly, the Heavenly,
And what is beyond the Heavens.
Having gone so far, they perceive what is honourable, and, having so perceived,
They regard what preceded this as a delay, as a problem
And, with little regard for whatever is embodied and disembodied,
They strive toward the Monas.

[6] This, Thoth, is the episteme of perceiveration,
Of <considering the divine> and of understanding divinity,
For the chaldron is numinous.

Father, I also desire to be so immersed.

My son, primarily, unless you have a prejudice about the body
You cannot have affection for yourself, and when you have affection for yourself
You can acquire perceiverance and, having perceiverance,
You can participate in episteme.

Can you, father, explain that?

It is not possible, my son, to be of both the deathful and the divine.
For there are two kinds of existents, the bodily and the non-bodily,
Perceived as deathful and divine; a choice of one or of the other
Should there be a desire to do so. It cannot be both
With the decline of one uncovering the reality of the other.

[7] By choosing the higher not only is there a good ending - the apotheosis of the mortal -
For the one who chooses but also a numinous awareness of theos,
While, if the lower, although it has been the ruination of mortals
It is no termeration against theos
But rather something garish that passes by amid us yet is unaffective
Even if an impediment to others
Just as those others are garishly worldly
Having been influenced by bodily pleasures.

[8] Because of this, then - Thoth - what is from theos can be and has been ours
So let what accompanies us be that now instead of later.
For it is we who select dishonour rather than honour
With theos blameless in this.
Do you, my son, apprehend how many celestial bodies we have to traverse -
How many groups of Daimons and sequential constellations -
So that we hasten to the Monas.

For the honourable is unpassable, without limit, and unending
Even though to us its origin appears to be the knowledge.

[9] But even though such knowledge is not the origin of it
It yields to us the origin of our knowing.
Thus should we apprehend such an origin and hasten upon our journey
For it is not easy to abandon what we have become accustomed to
And go back to what is elden and in the past.

What is apparent can please us while what is concealed can cause doubt
With what is bad often overt while the honourable is often concealed
Having as it has neither pattern nor guise.

Which is why it is akin to itself but different from everything else
For it is not possible for what is disembodied to be overtly embodied.

[10] This is the distinction between what is akin and what is different
With what is different having a privation of what is akin.

Since the Monas is the origin and foundation of everything
It is within everything as origin and foundation
For if there is no origin there is nothing
And the origin is not from anything but itself
Since it is the origin of everything else,
Just as the Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos
Without itself being enfolded by any,
Begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any:

[11] Everything that is begotten is unfinished, partible,
Liable to decline, resurgence
Which do not befall what is complete
For what is resurgent is resurgence from Monas
But what is brought low is so by its own malady
Because unable to hold Monas.

This, then, Thoth, is the eikon of the theos
Insofar as it can be drawn:
If you - clearly, carefully - and with the eyes of your heart apprehend it
Then I assure you, my son, that you shall find the path to what is above:
In truth, the eikon will guide you
Since the seeing of it is uniquely your own,
For those who attain such a beholding are attentively held, pulled up,
Just as it is said lodestone does with iron.

Commentary

1.

artisan. δημιουργόν. See Poemandres 9. The theme of an artisan-creator, and their artisements, is common to the third tractate (Ιερός Λόγος) as well. That the tractate begins by using the term artisan, rather than theos, is perhaps significant.

that Being. The conventional and grammatical interpretation is "you should understand *him* as..." although how such a human-type gender could be adduced from or manifest by how the 'body' of the artisan-creator is described in subsequent verses is an interesting and relevant metaphysical question.

Can, or should, a 'body' that cannot be touched, that cannot be seen, that

cannot be measured, that is not separable - οὐδὲ διαστατόν - and thus which is not conventionally 'human', be described as male? It is to suggest such metaphysical questions (and the limitations of ordinary language in describing and answering such metaphysical questions) that I have here departed from convention and used 'that Being' instead of 'him'. The term 'Being' also has the advantage that it avoids the gender bias implicit in translating θεὸς as 'god' given that 'god/God' implies a male entity.

There is also an interesting and perhaps relevant mention, in the second tractate of the Corpus, of the one, the being, who - like an artisan - constructs things: ὁ οὖν θεὸς <τὸ> ἀγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα προσηγορία ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ πατρός, πάλιν διὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν πάντων. πατρὸς γὰρ τὸ ποιεῖν. (Thus theos is the noble and the noble is theos, although another title is that of father because the artifex of all being. For it is of a father to construct.)

However, in terms of gender and Hellenic mythos and metaphysics, it is sometimes overlooked that Γαία, Earth Mother, in one of the Homeric hymns, Εἰς Γῆν Μητέρα Πάντων, is described as πρέσβιστος: the elder among beings, and the mother of the gods, θεῶν μήτηρ. Thus, while it might be of "a father to construct" it is "of a mother to bring forth life", to give birth to beings, including the gods themselves.

presential. πάρειμι. Presential - from the classical Latin praesentia - means "having or implying actual presence", as manifesting (as being presenced) in a locality or with an individual, and is thus more apposite here than the rather bland word 'present'. Cf. the use of 'presenced' in Ιερός Λόγος 2, et sequentia.

One only. ἑνὸς μόνου. A formulaic mystic phrase, implying uniqueness. Cf. ordinary usage in Plato, *Crito* 47, ἢ ἑνὸς μόνου ἐκείνου [...] ἑνὸς μόνου.

thelesis. θέλησις. Given what follows - τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν - a transliteration to suggest something other than a human type 'will' or 'desire'; such as 'disposition'. That is, Being (whatsoever of whomsoever Being is, in terms of gender and otherwise) is predisposed to craft - to presence - being as beings: as immortals (deities), as mortals (humans) and otherwise, qv. Ιερός Λόγος, Poemandres 8 ff, and Poemandres 31: οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων (whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts).

formed. As an artisan forms their artisements, and thus manifests their skill, their artistry, in what they produce. That is, the artisan-creator has formed, crafted, being (all existence) as beings.

(not) *separable*. οὐδὲ διαστατόν. What is not meant is 'dimension', given what the term 'dimension' now imputes scientifically and otherwise.

Pneuma. πνεῦμα. A transliteration for reasons explained in my commentary on

the text of Poemandres 5:

> given that the English alternatives - such as 'spirit' or 'breath' - not only do not always describe what the Greek implies but also suggest things not always or not necessarily in keeping with the Hellenic nature of the text. This particular transliteration has a long history in English, dating back to 1559 CE. In 1918, DeWitt Burton published a monograph - listing, with quotations, the various senses of πνεῦμα - entitled *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918).
>
> I incline toward the view that πνεῦμα here - like λόγος - does not necessarily imply something theological (in the Christian sense or otherwise) but rather suggests an alternative, more personal, weltanschauung that, being a weltanschauung, is undoctrinal and subtle, and which weltanschauung is redolent of Hellenic culture. Subtle and undoctrinal in the way that early alchemical texts are subtle and undoctrinal and try to express, or hint at (however obscurely to us, now), a weltanschauung, and one which is more paganus than Christian.

Even though all such things are from that Being. ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. Literally, 'even though all are from that'. One therefore might understand it to imply 'even though all beings/things are from that Being.'

honourable. ἀγαθός. qv. Poemandres 22, where I referenced a quotation from the Corpus Aristotelicum:

> τῆς δὲ φρονήσεώς ἐστι τὸ βουλεύσασθαι, τὸ κρῖναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἱρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πᾶσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὁμιλῆσαι ὀρθῶς [De Virtutibus et Vitiis Libellus 1250a]
>
> It is part of wisdom to accept advice, to distinguish the honourable, the dishonourable, and all that is, in life, acceptable or to be avoided; to fairly use all resources; to be genuine in company.

Honourable - noble - rather than some abstract or dogmatically defined 'good'. That is, the Hellenic distinction is between good (honourable) personal character and bad (dishonourable) personal character rather than - as for example in Christianity - referencing some abstract, or God-given or dogmatically (Church) defined 'good'.

entrust solely to. I follow the MSS, which have μόνῳ, with οὐ μόνῳ being a fairly recently emendation which completely changes the meaning.

orderly arrangement. κοσμέω. In esoteric terms, a presencing, on Earth, of the cosmic order itself, qv. Poemandres 8: "having comprehended the logos and having seen the beauty of the cosmic order, re-presented it..."

Regarding 'presencing', qv. my translation of and commentary on section two of the third tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, Ιερός Λόγος:

> ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἁπάντων καὶ ἀκατασκευάστων.
>
> With all beings unformed and not yet presenced.

2.

a cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings. κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον. That is, human beings re-present, presence, the 'divine body' and are, of themselves, a reflection of the cosmic order itself. This, and the preceding line, express a fundamental part of ancient and Renaissance hermeticism: human beings as a microcosm of the cosmic order and the divine.

Hence why the twenty-sixth chapter of the book *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* by Marsilii Ficini (published in 1489 CE) has as its heading:

> Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona.
>
> How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presenced therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned.

Also, in respect of ἄνθρωπος I have used here - as in my Poemandres - the gender neutral 'human being' instead of the more usual 'man', and also - as there - occasionally used the term 'mortal' when the context suggests it.

Regarding 'the cosmic order' (κόσμος) itself qv. Poemandres 7; 14, and Ιερός Λόγος 4:

> The divine is all of that mixion: renewance of the cosmic order through Physis
> For Physis is presenced in the divine.

a deathful life and yet a deathless life. This (including the borrowing of the terms deathful and deathless, in juxtaposition, from Chapman) is explained in section 14 of the Poemandres tractate:

> θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον.

deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal.

Logos and Perceiverance. In my commentary on the Poemandres tractate I have explained my reasons for transliterating (and sometimes capitalizing) λόγος as logos (qv. the commentary on section 5) - rather than as 'Word' or 'Speech' - and for translating νοῦς as perceiverance/perceiveration rather than as the conventional 'mind' (see for example the commentary on sections 2 and 10). Refer also to comments there regarding terms such as pneumal logos (πνευματικὸν λόγον), phaomal logos (φωτεινὸς λόγος) and θεοῦ λόγος.

Here Logos suggests 'reasoning', with perceiverance having its usual sense of 'awareness', of comprehending what is perceived, as for example, in being able to rationally or intuitively assess a situation, a person, or persons. As with (and for example) Logos, Psyche, and Physis, perceiverance - capitalized as Perceiverance - can also be personified and thus regarded as a fundamental quality germane to the life of deathful mortals.

3.

whose Psyche does not convey Perceiverance. It is possible to see in this an esoteric allusion to psyche personified, especially given what follows: τοῦτον ἐν μέσῳ ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὥσπερ ἆθλον ἱδρῦσθαι. In ancient mythology - such as the ancient myth of Psyche and Eros, retold by Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses,* which was written around the same time as this Hermetic tractate, and which story also involves Hermes - Psyche initially lacked perceiverance but through striving to succeed in the trials given to her by Aphrodite she acquires it.

Hence why here I have personified both psyche and perceiverance. I have also transliterated ψυχή so as, as I noted in my Poemandres, to not impose a particular meaning on the text. For whether what is meant is anima mundi, or the ancient paganus sense of the 'spark' - the source, or breath - of life, or what we now denote by the terms 'soul' and 'spirit', is open to debate, especially as the terms soul and spirit possess much later and modern connotations that may not be relevant to such an ancient text. Connotations such as suggesting the incorporeal, or immaterial being, as distinct from body or matter; or the Christian concept of the soul.

As an illustration of matters of interpretation, two subtly different senses of ψυχή are evident in the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles:

τῶνδε γὰρ πλέον φέρω
τὸ πένθος ἢ καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς πέρι.

For my concern for their suffering

Is more than even that for my own psyche.

vv.93-4

ἀλλά μοι δυσμόρῳ γᾶ φθινὰς
τρύχει ψυχάν, τάδ᾽ εἰ κακοῖς κακὰ
προσάψει τοῖς πάλαι τὰ πρὸς σφῷν.

But ill-fated would be my breath of life - which the decay in this soil
Already wears down - if to those troubles of old
There was joined this trouble between you and him.

vv.665-667

In respect of ψυχή, the Hermetic text here implies that ill-will is associated with those whose nature is such that they lack the ability to rationally or intuitively assess and comprehend a situation or other people.

father. ὦ πάτερ is a traditional way of showing respect for an elder, in this case of Thoth for Hermes.

position it half-way between those psyches, as a reward. Thus, while Logos is a gift to all mortals from theos, Perceiverance is not and has to be earned, striven for, as an athlete has to strive to earn a prize. [The English word athlete is related to the Greek word used here - ἆθλον - via the Greek ἀθλητής and thence the classical Latin athleta.]

chaldron. κρατῆρ. See the Introduction.

envoy. While the conventional translation here of κῆρυξ is 'herald', I consider it unsatisfactory given what that English term now often denotes: either the type of herald familiar from the New Testament or the herald of medieval literature and stories (qv. Morte Arthure, and The Knights Tale by Chaucer). Given the Greco-Roman context (Hermes, Thoth) and classical antecedents (such as Hermes as the protector of mortal envoys and messengers) then 'envoy' is more accurate especially given that this is an envoy from the artisan-creator assigned to impart information to mortals.

Ascend to the one [...] how you came-into-being. There are similarities here to the Poemandres tractate in relation to the anados - the journey up through the spheres (Poemandres 24) toward theos - and the desire "to apprehend the physis of beings" (Poemandres 3).

and were immersive with perceiveration. καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός. That is, were or became characterized by having become immersed with - suffused by -

perceiveration.

Here, as elsewhere the understanding of νοῦς as perceiverance/perceiveration rather than as 'mind' makes the text understandable: for the mortals became suffused with a particular (and, for most, probably a new type of) perception, a new way of seeing the world, themselves, and other mortals, and thus acquire a particular type of knowing, whereas an expression such as "immersed themselves with mind" is obscure to the point of being either unintelligible or requiring a long discourse on the nature of "mind" based as such discourses invariably are on certain philosophical assumptions.

The sense of acquiring a new way of seeing the world, themselves, and other mortals is evident in the text that follows: οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως (gained, acquired, partook of, a knowing).

more complete mortals. The sense of τέλειος here is not that of being 'perfect' but rather of being 'entire', more completed, 'more rounded', than others. Thus there is no sense of "perfect people" or "perfect humans" - with implied moral, and other, superiority - but rather of those who, having a different perception of things to most others, were akin to initiates of a mystical or an esoteric tradition: apart from others because of that particular knowledge that their new, initiated, perception, has brought, but still mortal. This sense is evident in the text that follows: τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι.

received the perceiveration. It is possible that this is an allusion to 'the perceiverance' - the gnosis - that initiates of a particular mystic or esoteric tradition acquire when certain esoteric, mystic, knowledge is imparted to them.

4.

declaim to the hearts of mortals. A figurative usage of 'heart', referring here as often elsewhere in Greek and Hellenic culture to the feelings, the emotions (qv. Iliad, Book IX, 646 and The Odyssey, Book XVII, 489) as well as to the ethos, the nature, and the understanding, of the individual.

See also "with the eyes of the heart" in section 11.

5.

*alertnes*s. αἴσθησις. For which see Poemandres 1. The sense is that they are always alert, and - like animals - react instinctively because they lack the objective awareness that perceiverance (νοῦς) brings and which objective awareness (of themselves and others) makes mortals into complete human beings.

Confident. Given the context, πιστεύω here suggests 'confidence' rather than 'belief'; for this is the arrogant instinctive confidence of those who lack

perceiverance and who have no firm belief in anything other than their own bodily pleasure and fulfilling their desires and who thus reject - or who cannot intuit - the numinous perspective of the divine, a perspective which would reveal the possibility of immortality.

parten to that gift [...] when set against their deeds. The text suggests that the gift of immortality which theos gives is freely bestowed among those whose deeds reveal that they have understood what the chaldron is and does, with the fourteenth century English word parten [to have something in common with something or someone else] expressing the meaning here of the Greek μετέχω.

apprehend the Earthly, the Heavenly, and what is beyond the Heavens. An alternative - following the Latin version of the text - omnia complexi sua mente, et terrena et caelestia et si quid est supra caelum - would be "apprehend the terran, the celestial, and what is beyond the celestial."

(as a) problem. The context suggests that what is meant is that life before "having so perceived" was a problem, not that it was a 'misfortune' or a calamity. A problem - a challenge - to overcome, which challenge they accepted leading to them gaining the prize, for theos had positioned that prize "half-way between those psyches, as a reward."

The same sense in respect of συμφορά is apparent in Oedipus Tyrannus by Sophocles:

> θεοῖσι μέν νυν οὐκ ἰσούμενόν σ᾽ ἐγὼ
> οὐδ᾽ οἵδε παῖδες ἑζόμεσθ᾽ ἐφέστιοι,
> ἀνδρῶν δὲ πρῶτον ἔν τε συμφοραῖς βίου
> κρίνοντες ἔν τε δαιμόνων συναλλαγαῖς
>
> Not as an equal of the gods do I,
> And these children who sit by your altar, behold you -
> But as the prime man in our problems of life
> And in our dealings and agreements with daimons.
>
> vv. 31-34

disembodied. ἀσώματος - etymologically, a privation of σωματικός - occurs in works by Aristotle and, perhaps more relevant here, in writers such as Iamblichus who in De Mysteriis, V, 16 writes in general terms about the body in relation to offering to the gods and daimons that which, or those things which, might free the body from ailments and bring health, and the necessity in such matters as offerings of not considering the body in either non-bodily or noetic terms:

> τότε δὴ οὖν οὐ δήπου νοερῶς καὶ ἀσωμάτως τὸ σῶμα

> μεταχειριζόμεθα· οὐ γὰρ πέφυκε τῶν τοιούτων τρόπων τὸ σῶμα μετέχειν· τῶν δὲ συγγενῶν ἑαυτῷ μεταλαγχάνον, σώμασι σῶμα θεραπεύεταί τε καὶ ἀποκαθαίρεται.

Thus the sense of καταφρονήσαντες πάντων τῶν σωματικῶν καὶ ἀσωμάτων ἐπὶ τὸ ἓν seems to be that what is important is a striving for the monas not a noetic concern for the difference between whatever is embodied and whatever is considered disembodied.

Monas. μονάς. A transliteration since it here does not necessarily, as I noted in the Introduction, signify "The One, The Only" (τὸ ἓν) of such weltanschauungen as those termed Pythagorean, neo-Pythagorean, or Gnostic; or 'the one God' of religious monotheisms such as Christianity.

6.

episteme. A transliteration of ἐπιστήμη, which could be - and has been - accented thus: épistémé. The meaning is 'a way', or a means or a method, by which something can be known, understood, and appreciated. In this case, perceiveration, which the artisan-creator has positioned "half-way between psyches, as a reward."

Episteme, therefore, should be considered a technical, esoteric, term associated with some of the weltanschauungen that are described in the Corpus Hermeticum. Thus, in the Poemandres tractate, the anados through the seven spheres is an episteme.

considering the divine. The MSS have ἐντορία and various emendations, recent and otherwise, have been proposed including ἐυτορία and ιστορία. Interestingly, the Renaissance Latin text published in 1554 has, for the line, 'scientia mentis est diuinorum contemplatio & intelligentia dei, diuino existente cratere' with Parthey's 1854 edition reading 'mentis scientia, divinorum inspectio et dei comprehensio, quia divinus est crater.'

I am inclined toward ιστορία, which conveys the sense here of considering, of obtaining information about - of contemplating - divinity, the numinous, and thus the relation of mortals to divinity. A sense which fits will with the following καὶ ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ κατανόησις.

For the chaldron is numinous. θείου ὄντος τοῦ κρατῆρος. For θεῖος here I have opted for the English word numinous (dating from 1647 and from the classical Latin term numen) to express the sense of inclusion - of/from the divinity and of itself being divine - that the word 'divine' by itself does not, particularly given the previous "considering the divine and of understanding divinity."

Primarily, unless you have a prejudice about the body. Ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτοντὸ σῶμά σου μισήσῃς. To always - regardless of textual context and milieu - translate

μισέω/μῖσος as "hate" is or can be misleading, given how the English word hate implies (and is understood as meaning) an extreme personal emotion, an intense personal aversion to something, and also a certain malevolence. Consider, for example, the following from Thucydides:

> ἀπὸ τούτου τε πρῶτον Περδίκκας Βρασίδαν τε πολέμιον ἐνόμισε καὶ ἐς τὸ λοιπὸν Πελοποννησίων τῇ μὲν γνώμῃ δι᾽ Ἀθηναίους οὐ ξύνηθες μῖσος εἶχε, τῶν δὲ ἀναγκαίων ξυμφόρων διαναστὰς ἔπρασσεν ὅτῳ τρόπῳ τάχιστα τοῖς μὲν ξυμβήσεται, τῶν δὲ ἀπαλλάξεται. (4.128)

His reaching an agreement with the Peloponnesians while at the same time still being determined to be rid of his foe does not imply an implacable, intense, personal hatred in the first place, but rather a generalized dislike (in this case just a certain prejudice) of the kind that can be dispensed with if it is personally - or strategically - advantageous to do so. Thus to translate the relevant part as "it was then that Perdiccas first considered Brasidas his foe and felt a prejudice toward the Peloponnesians" seems apt, especially given the qualification mentioned in the text: τῇ μὲν γνώμη δι᾽ Ἀθηναίους.

The preference for the metaphysical, for striving for immortality and for understanding the numinous, that this tractate describes is not, as some have assumed, an ascetic "hatred" of the physical body. Instead, it is just a positive bias in favour of such metaphysical, spiritual matters, and a prejudice against a fixation on bodily and material things.

This preference is also evident in Poemandres 19:

> "they of self-knowledge attained a particular benefit while they who, misled by Eros, love the body, roamed around in the dark, to thus, perceptively, be afflicted by death."

For, as noted in my commentary on τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα in Poemandres 19:

> The consensus is, and has been, that ἔρωτα here signifies 'carnal desire' - or something similar - so that it is assumed that what is meant is some sort of ascetic (or Gnostic or puritanical) statement about how sexual desire should be avoided or at the very least controlled. However, this seems rather at variance with the foregoing - regarding propagating and spawning - which inclines me to suggest that what is meant here is 'eros', not necessarily personified as the classical deity (ἠδ᾽ Ἔρος ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ᾽ ἀνθρώπων δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν), although the comparison is interesting, but rather as an elemental or archetypal principle, akin to νοῦς and λόγος. Consider, for example, the following from Daphnis and Chloe, written by Longus around the same time as the Corpus Hermeticum: πάντως

γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἔρωτα ἔφυγεν ἢ φεύξεται μέχρις ἂν κάλλος ᾖ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ βλέπωσιν [Book 1, Proem, 4 - "no one can avoid or has ever been able to avoid Eros, while there is beauty and eyes which perceive"]. In modern terms, few - poetically, metaphorically, none - have avoided or could avoid, at some time in their life, the unconscious power of the anima/animus.

There are two kinds of existents, bodily and non-bodily. δύο γὰρ ὄντων τῶν ὄντων. This duality, in respect of mortals, is evident in the Poemandres tractate:

> διὰ τοῦτο παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς ζῷα διπλοῦς ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον
>
> distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal
>
> (Poemandres 15)

This contrast between the deathful body and the immortality that is possible (the potential for immortality that lies within mortals) is essentially the same as the one described here: the bodily and the divine, the embodied and the disembodied.

7.

apotheosis of the mortal. Not here a literal making of "the mortal into a god" or even an actual "deification of the mortal" (by whomsoever) but rather a bringing about in the mortal an apotheosis - ἀποθέωσις - in the sense of an ascension toward immortality, a spiritual journey from earthly life, a figurative resurrection of, or actual elevation in, the life of the mortal.

This latter sense is evident in the use of ἀποθέωσις by Cicero in his Epistularum Ad Atticum - videsne consulatum illum nostrum, quem Curio antea ἀποθέωσιν vocabat, si hic factus erit, fabam mimum futurum (Liber Primus, XVI, 13) - for this early use of the Greek word concerns the elevated rank of Consul, and thus the honour and privileges that such a privileged rank brings.

a numinous awareness of theos. In respect of εὐσεβέω as an "awareness of the numinous" qv. my Poemandres, 22.

termeration. From the Latin termero and thus appropriate here, given the context, in respect of πλημμελέω, suggesting as it can both a violation and a profanation, while avoiding the interpretation that words such as "transgression" (toward god), "trespassed (against god) and "offence" (against god) impute, especially given the usual translations of Christian texts written in

Greek, such as translations of the following from the Septuagint: ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ περὶ ἑνὸς ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν ἐποίησεν καὶ ἐπλημμέλησεν αὐτῷ (Leviticus 5, 26).

something garish that passes by. The exact meaning of πομπή here is unclear, with suggestions ranging from parade, pageant, to procession (religious or otherwise), which all seem out of context since they all can have an affect, a purpose, and can achieve things other than just being a hindrance to passers-by.

The context suggests something metaphorical and similar to what Cicero wrote:

> quem tu mihi addidisti sane ad illum σύλλογον personam idoneam. Videbis igitur, si poteris, ceteros, ut possimus πομπεῦσαι καὶ τοῖς προσώποις (Epistularum Ad Atticum, Liber Tertius Decimus, 32:3)

That is, similar to a showy or affected countenance or facade or personae, or an act, or some pompous attempt to impress which however is not effective as in Oedipus Tyrannus:

> εἰπὼν ἄπειμ᾽ ὧν οὕνεκ᾽ ἦλθον οὐ τὸ σὸν
> δείσας πρόσωπον οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ᾽ ὅπου μ᾽ ὀλεῖς
>
> I shall go but speak that for which I was fetched, with no dread
> Because of your countenance. For you cannot harm me. (448)

garishly worldly. I take the sense of κόσμος here to refer to 'that cosmos' - the world of mortals - previously described as "the cosmos of the divine body": the microcosm which the artisan-creator crafted and in which we mortals have our being. See the commentary in section 2 on the phrase *a cosmos of the divine body*.

Hence the poetic metaphor here: garishly worldly. Of living a garish - facile - life in our microcosm even though the artisan-creator has provided a means for us to attain immortality and thus, as described in the Poemandres tractate, become a part of a higher, a divine, cosmic order.

8.

select dishonour For κακός as 'bad' and 'dishonourable' rather than 'evil' refer to my commentary on Poemandres 22 from which this is an extract:

> "The usual translation of κακός here, as often elsewhere, is 'evil'. However, I regard such a translation as unhelpful, given that the English word 'evil' is (1) now often interpreted and understood in a moralistic, preconceived, way according to some theological

dogma/criteria and/or according to some political/social doctrine, and (2) that it does not denote what the classical and the Hellenic term κακός does. Classically understood κακός is what is bad in the sense of some-thing rotten or unhealthy, or – the opposite of κάλος – what is displeasing to see. κακός is also what is unlucky, a misfortune, and/or injurious [...] When applied to a person, the sense is of a 'rotten' person; someone with bad, harmful, physis; a bad - dishonourable, weak, cowardly - personal character."

theos blameless in this. In respect of ἀναίτιος, compare Agamemnon 1505:

> ὡς μὲν ἀναίτιος εἶ
> τοῦδε φόνου τίς ὁ μαρτυρήσων
>
> Is there anyone who will bear witness
> That you are blameless in this killing?

celestial body. By σῶμα (body) here is meant the celestial body, the 'harmonious structure', which is described in terms of seven spheres in the Poemandres tractate and which mortals must ascend through in sequence in order to attain immortality and thus be in the company of theos. This ascension through the spheres is there described as an anados - ἔτι δέ μοι εἰπὲ περὶ τῆς ἀνόδου τῆς γινομένης - with Poemandres (in section 25) describing the journey in detail, with each sphere represented by one of the seven classical planets:

> καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον [...]
>
> Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning [...]

Plato, in Timaeus 32c, uses σῶμα to refer to the substance - the body - of the cosmos as being formed from fire, water, air and earth:

> ὸν ἀριθμὸν τεττάρων τὸ τοῦ κόσμου σῶμα ἐγεννήθη δι᾽ ἀναλογίας ὁμολογῆσαν

sequential constellations. In context, συνέχειαν καὶ δρόμους ἀστέρω suggests a type of movement, a path, through certain stars or constellations. That is, a particular or ordered sequence: the anados through the septenary system, with it being possible that the use here of ἀστήρ (star) - rather than κύκλος (sphere,

orb) as in Poemandres - implied an aural esoteric tradition associating each sphere with a corresponding star or constellation, an ancient tradition found in Renaissance alchemical and magical texts.

the honourable is unpassable. Reading ἀδιάβατον, which implies that what is honourable is always there, always around, always noticeable when it is presenced by someone. In other words - given the following καὶ ἀπέραντον καὶ ἀτελές - there are always some mortals who will (qv. sections 5 and 8) select honour rather than dishonour: who will (as described in section 4) "receive the perceiveration," having won that prize gifted by theos.

9.

Even though to us its origin appears to be the knowledge. The expression ἡμῖν δὲ δοκοῦν ἀρχὴν ἔχειν τὴν γνῶσιν is interesting given that it refers to 'the knowledge', which some have construed to refer to the gnosis of certain pagan weltanschauungen. However, since what this particular knowledge is, is not specified, to translate as 'the Gnosis' would be to impose a particular and modern interpretation on the text given what the term gnosticism now denotes. All that can be adduced from the text is that this particular knowledge may refer to and be the knowledge imparted in the text itself: the knowledge that Hermes is here imparting to Thoth.

The word translated here as origin is ἀρχή and which Greek term has various philosophical connotations in Anaximander, Plato, et al. What it here denotes, as evident in the text that follows (sections 10 and 11), is origin, beginning, source.

not the origin of it. Referring to what is honourable and its origin/beginning.

hasten upon our journey. While the text - λαβώμεθα οὖν τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ ὁδεύσωμεν τάχει ἅπαντα - is somewhat obscure it seems reasonable to assume that what is meant or implied is the necessity of beginning - of hastening upon - the complete, the entire, journey toward the Monas with all that implies in terms of everything encountered along the way.

not easy. The sense of σκολιόν here - in the context of leaving what one has become accustomed to and is comfortable with - suggests 'tangled', indirect, 'not straightforward', 'tortuous', and thus 'not easy'.

elden. A rather obscure English word meaning 'belonging to earlier times', and used to avoid the negative connotations that words such as 'ancient' can imply.

What is apparent can please [...] neither pattern nor guise. τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαινόμενα τέρπει, τὰ δὲ ἀφανῆ δυσπιστεῖν ποιεῖ. φανερώτερα δέ ἐστι τὰ κακά, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανεροῖς

This is an interesting passage, often interpreted in terms of moral abstractions, of 'good' and 'evil'. However, as previously mentioned, I incline toward the somewhat iconoclastic view that there is a more Greek, a more Hellenic, and an essentially pagan, interpretation of ἀγαθός consistent with the Greek mystery traditions, with Homer, with the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and with how theos was generally understood in ancient Greece and in Greco-Roman, Hellenistic, times. Which is of ἀγαθός - and of κακός - (i) when referring to mortals as referring to personal character, of character being most often revealed by deeds, by what has been observed because done visibly, or to outward appearance in terms of τὸ καλόν, of what is considered beautiful or not beautiful; and (ii) when used of things - living or dead - as referring to the difference between 'rotten', bad', and what is not rotten, as in a rotten tree or a piece of food.

What is expressed here is of how outward appearances can please, how we can be suspicious - doubtful - about what is concealed, what has not yet been revealed; with what is bad often outwardly obvious (as in the case of a rotten tree or a rotten person) but with what is good, honourable, often being concealed because it has no particular pattern or guise until it has been revealed, for example by noble, honourable deeds. Thus the suggestion seems to be that there is or can be a revealing of what is good when mortals seek the theos-gifted prize of perceiveration, which seeking of that prize, and winning it, is of itself a good, a necessary, an honourable, thing to do, leading at it does to a hastening toward the Monas.

The passage also invites comparison with one in Plato's Republic and one in Aristotle's Metaphysics.

In Book XII, 1074b, Aristotle wrote:

> τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχει τινὰς ἀπορίας: δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον, πῶς δ᾽ ἔχων τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη, ἔχει τινὰς δυσκολίας

The expression δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον has led to disputations among some scholars with some considering the passage corrupt and in need of emendation, for their difficulty lies in Aristotle apparently stating that 'Mind' is, like other phenomena, perceptible to our senses. However, if one does not translate νοῦς as 'Mind' - with all the preconceptions, philosophical an otherwise, that have over centuries become attached to that term - and one also appreciates that φαίνω here as sometimes elsewhere is not a simple 'observing' - of seeing, of observing, phenomena - but rather a revealing, then there is little if any difficulty. For instance, does the following interpretation of part of that passage make sense with respect to phenomena? "Perceiveration, of all revealing, appears to be the most numinous."

Indeed so, because perceiveration is a perception involving a certain

awareness, a revealing to us, of what is observed; that is, an apprehension, and Aristotle's reasoning (insofar as I understand it) is that this awareness - νοῦς - is the most numinous, 'the most divine', revealing because we mortals can apprehended, be or become aware of, and thus have knowledge of, theos. Which is basically what Hermes has in this tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum imparted to Thoth.

In Book VII, 517β - 517ξ, of the Republic, Plato wrote:

> τὰ δ᾽ οὖν ἐμοὶ φαινόμενα οὕτω φαίνεται, ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ τελευταία ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα καὶ μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι

Which brings us, again, to ἀγαθός invariably translated as it hitherto has been - in respect of the Corpus Hermeticum, and many of the writings of Aristotle and Plato - as an abstraction termed 'good', as well it might be in respect of Plato given that he posits an abstract (a true, ideal) beauty and an abstract (true, ideal) being, as in Phaedo 78b where he writes about *αὐτὸ* τὸ καλόν and about *αὐτὸ* ἕκαστον ὃ ἔστιν, and why in Symposium 210e - 211a he states regarding his ideal, his form, his ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος, which he sometimes and confusingly uses interchangeably, that:

> πρῶτον μὲν ἀεὶ ὂν καὶ οὔτε γιγνόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλύμενον, οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον
>
> Firstly, it always exists, and has no genesis. It does not die, does not grow, does not decay.

What, therefore, seems to have occurred, in respect of this and other tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum, is the assumption that ἀγαθός always refers back to Plato's ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος (and to those influenced by him or are assumed to be his precursors) leading to moralistic interpretations such as that of Mead where ἀγαθός is divorced from the physis (φύσις), the character, the individuality, of mortals: "evils are the more apparent things, whereas the Good can never show Itself unto the eyes, for It hath neither form nor figure." Thus, that in respect of mortals, ἀγαθός, rather than having its genesis, its origin, its very being, in some individual mortals - and attainable by others because of the prize of perceiverance offered by theos - is considered as something external which could be attained by, which has its being in, is embodied by, such abstractions (the 'politics') as Plato delineates in his theorized Republic and in such abstractions as were posited by the early Christian Church.

For it is not possible for what is disembodied to be overtly embodied. ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἀσώματον σώματι φανῆναι. That is, it is not possible to discern who is honourable from their outward appearance, for what is honourable is manifest, revealed, through personal deeds.

10.

enfolds every arithmos [...] begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any. This passage, with its mention of ἀριθμός, is often assumed to refer to the Pythagorean doctrine regarding numbers since ἀριθμός is invariably translated as 'number' - thus implying what the English word implies, especially in mathematical terms - even though Aristotle, in discussing ἀριθμός, wrote: ἄλλος δέ τις τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τὸν τῶν εἰδῶν ἕνα εἶναι, ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον εἶνα (Metaphysics, Book XIII, 1080b.20).

Given such a necessary distinction - and the discussion regarding ἀριθμός and Pythagoras in Book XIII, 1083b.10 et seq - as well as the fact that what ἀριθμός means here, in this tractate, and what it implies - such as the mathematical numbers 2 and 3 developing from the One - is not mentioned, I have transliterated ἀριθμός thus leaving open what it may or may not mean in relation to the particular weltanschauung being described. However, the context seems to suggest a metaphysical rather than an abstract mathematical notion, especially given what follows at the beginning of section 11: πᾶν δὲ τὸ γεννώμενον ἀτελὲς καὶ διαιρετόν.

begetting/begotten. It is interesting to compare the use here of γεννάω (beget/engender) with the use of γέννημα in Poemandres 8 (the birth of Psyche) and 30 (of Logos breeding nobility).

11.

resurgence [...] decline. The sense here, in context, is not as abstract, as impersonal, as a translation such as "increase and decrease" implies. Rather it suggests "resurgence and decline", as happens with living things.

what is complete. The reference is to the Monas.

eikon of theos. I have transliterated εἰκὼν as eikon since - for reasons mentioned in my commentary on Poemandres 31 - it implies more, in some ancient mystical tractates, than what the word 'image' now denotes.

eyes of your heart. A similar expression occurs in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians - πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας <ὑμῶν> (1.18) - although, as some scholars have noted (qv. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, Baker Academic, 2002. p.260f) the Greek syntax there is problematic.

the path to what is above. That is, the anados (ἄνοδος) mentioned in the Poemandres tractate, composed as the word ἄνοδος is from ἀνά (above) and ὁδός (path), the two Greek words used here.

the seeing of it is uniquely your own. What is being conveyed is that the eikon is of itself mystical - not an ordinary image or painting - and can impart to the

person, who "with the eyes of their heart" views it, something unique, personal, numinous.

lodestone. μαγνῆτις λίθος. Lodestone, and not a 'magnet' in the modern sense.

῾Οτι ἐν μόνῳ θεῷ τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἀλλαχόθι δὲ οὐδαμοῦ.

That In The Theos Alone Is Nobility And Not Anywhere Else

Tractate VI

°°°

Introduction

The sixth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, concentrating as it does on τὸ ἀγαθὸν in relation to theos and mortals, is - in respect of the milieu of ancient Greco-Roman culture - metaphysically interesting even though existing translations, given that they invariably translate τὸ ἀγαθὸν as 'the good' and θεός as 'god', impart "the sense of reading somewhat declamatory sermons about god/God and 'the good' familiar from over a thousand years of persons preaching about Christianity." [1]

Since, for reasons explained elsewhere [1], I translate τὸ ἀγαθὸν as 'the noble' - implying nobility, honour, as expressed for example by Seneca, summum bonum est quod honestum est; et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt [2] - and also transliterate θεός as theos, then what emerges from this tractate is something redolent of Greco-Roman mysticism and thus of how τὸ ἀγαθὸν was understood by learned men such as Cicero: in terms of personal character [3] rather than as an impersonal moral abstraction leading as such an abstraction invariably does to dogmatic interpretations and thence to disputations and dissent and thence to the accusations of religious 'heresy' that bedevilled Christian churches for centuries, redolent as such moral abstractions, such dogmatism and accusations, are of an ethos that is rather un-Hellenic.

Such an understanding of τὸ ἀγαθὸν is evident in a passage in section nine of the fourth tractate:

> τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαινόμενα τέρπει, τὰ δὲ ἀφανῆ δυσπιστεῖν ποιεῖ. φανερώτερα δέ ἐστι τὰ κακά, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανεροῖς.
>
> What is apparent can please us while what is concealed can cause doubt with what is bad often overt while the honourable is often concealed having as it has neither pattern nor guise.

For what is expressed in that fourth tractate is that while what is bad is often outwardly obvious (as in the case of a rotten tree or a bad person) what is good, honourable, is often being concealed because it has no guise, no particular, discernable, pattern - no outward sign or appearance - becoming revealed only though noble, honourable, personal, deeds.

In respect of tractate six, the choice of τὸ ἀγαθὸν as 'the noble' (instead of the conventional 'the good') and κακός as 'bad' (instead of the conventional 'evil') elevates the text from a type of pious sermon to a metaphysical weltanschauung, something especially evident at the beginning of section three:

> In mortals, the noble are arrayed to compare with the bad, for in this place those not especially bad are the noble given that in this place nobility has the smallest portion of the bad.
>
> ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ κατὰ σύγκρισιν τὸ ἀγαθὸν τοῦ κακοῦ τέτακται τὸ γὰρ μὴ λίαν κακόν ἐνθάδε τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστι τὸ δὲ ἐνθάδε ἀγαθόν μόριον τοῦ κακοῦ τὸ ἐλάχιστον

Also, while the language of this sixth tractate is on occasions somewhat convoluted and apparently contradictory - as for example in the description in section two of Kosmos having nobility (τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἀγαθὸς ὁ κόσμος καθὰ καὶ αὐτὸς πάντα ποιεῖ) and yet being not noble in other ways (ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσιν οὐκ ἀγαθός) what is expressed metaphysically differs somewhat from some other tractates, revealing just how diverse the pagan mystical traditions represented in the Corpus Hermeticum are.

Despite the differences, most obvious when this tractate - with its rather negative portrayal of mortals and the insistence that beauty and nobility cannot be found in this world - is compared to the Poemandres tractate and the third (Ιερός Λόγος) tractate, what emerges is a hermetic weltanschauung and one that can best be summarized by the following lines from the last two sections:

> "[an] apprehension of theos [is] an apprehension of the beautiful and of the noble... [and] a quest for theos is a quest for the beautiful, and there is only one path there: an awareness of the numinous combined with knowledge [...]

> Yet those who do not apprehend, who do not follow the path of awareness of the numinous, have the effrontery to declare that mortals are beautiful and noble even though they have not observed, and have no semblance of, what the noble is."

This goes some way toward resolving the apparently contradictory nature of the text, asserting as it does at the beginning that "the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone" and yet also asserting toward the end not only that "if you are able to apprehend theos you can apprehend the beautiful and the noble." This is the ethos of a contemplative pagan, and a cultured, mysticism that seems to have been much neglected.

Notes

[1] Myatt, David. *Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum*.

[2] Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, LXXI, 4.

[3] In *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum,* Marcus Tullius Cicero, in criticizing Epicurus and others, presents his view of Summum Bonum: that honestum (honourable conduct) is its foundation and that it can be discerned by careful consideration (ratio) in conjunction with that knowing (scientia) of what is divine and what is mortal that has been described as wisdom (sapientia).

> aequam igitur pronuntiabit sententiam ratio adhibita primum divinarum humanarumque rerum scientia, quae potest appellari rite sapientia, deinde adiunctis virtutibus, quas ratio rerum omnium dominas, tu voluptatum satellites et ministras esse voluisti. (II, 37)

He then writes that honestum does not depend on any personal benefit (omni utilitate) that may result or be expected but instead can be discerned by means of consensus among the whole community in combination with the example afforded by the honourable actions and motives of the finest of individuals.

> Honestum igitur id intellegimus, quod tale est, ut detracta omni utilitate sine ullis praemiis fructibusve per se ipsum possit iure laudari. quod quale sit, non tam definitione, qua sum usus, intellegi potest, quamquam aliquantum potest, quam communi omnium iudicio et optimi cuiusque studiis atque factis, qui permulta ob eam unam causam faciunt, quia decet, quia rectum, quia honestum est, etsi nullum consecuturum emolumentum vident. (II, 45f)

In effect, Summum Bonum - what the Greeks termed τὸ ἀγαθὸν - depends on certain personal qualities such as a careful consideration of a matter; on a personal knowing of what is divine and what is mortal; on the example of personal noble deeds and motives, and on a communal consensus.

There is therefore nothing morally abstract or dogmatic about Cicero's understanding of Summum Bonum which so well expresses, as does Seneca, the

Greco-Roman view, with a perhaps more apt translation of the term Summum Bonum thus being "the highest nobility."

Translation

[1] Asclepius, the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone; indeed, theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. If so, then it can only be the quidditas of all changement and of geniture since nothing is deserted by it but has about itself a stability of vigour, neither excessive nor lacking, a replenishable provider, there at the origin of all things. When saying the provider to all-things is noble, that nobility always exists, an attribute of theos alone and of no one else.

He is not in need of anything since for him to desire something would be bad. Nothing that has come into being is lost to him, for such loss would be vexing with vexation a division of badness. Nothing is superior to him so as to be an enemy, nor is there a partner who might harm him through him having a passionate desire. Nor any-thing so unheeding of him that he becomes enraged; nor anyone of better judgement to be jealous of.

[2] Because none of those have being in his quidditas then only nobility is left, and since nothing of what is bad is in that quidditas then nothing of what is noble will be found in those other things, since, in all others be they big or small, those things exist, in each of them and also in that living being which is bigger and mightier than them all. For what is begotten is replete with physicality with breeding itself being physical. Yet where physicality is, nobility is not, and where nobility is there is no physicality just as when there is night there is no day. It is impracticable regarding breeding for nobility to be there for that is only of what is not begotten.

But as substance has been assigned to partake of all being so it does of nobility which is how Kosmos has nobility because of the construction done regarding all things, even though not noble in other ways since there is physicality, and changement: the construction of the physical.

[3] In mortals, the noble are arrayed to compare with the bad, for in this place those not especially bad are the noble given that in this place nobility has the smallest portion of the bad. But it is impractical in this place to refine the noble from the bad, for in this place the noble deteriorate and, deteriorating, become

rotten and no longer noble. Thus the noble is of theos alone or rather it is theos who is the noble one.

Thus it is, Asclepius, that among mortals they are noble in name only and not in the matter itself for that would be impracticable since the physical body cannot hold on to it, restrained on all sides as it is by badness, by toil, by grief, by desire, by rage, by dishonesty, and by unreasonable opinions; and, Asclepius, most ignoble of all, in this place each such thing is believed to be most noble even though unsurpassably bad.

The mistake, the patron of all things rotten, is the absence in this place of nobility.

[4] For myself, I am beholden to theos who has directed my perceiveration toward a knowing of nobility; that it is impracticable for it to be in this world replete as it is with badness just as it is with the nobility of theos or as theos is with nobility.

For the eminence of the beautiful is around that quidditas so perhaps revealing that quiddity as certainly unmixed and most refined, and I venture to say, Asclepius, that the quidditas of theos - if he has quidditas - is the beautiful and yet the beautiful and the noble cannot be discerned in the things of the world for everything exposed to the eye are as tenuous depictions, and what is not exposed to it, particularly the beautiful and the noble <...> and since the eye is unable to perceive theos so it is with the beautiful and the noble. For they are intrinsically part of theos, of him alone, belonging to him, unseverable, most fair; loved by theos or by those who love theos.

[5] If you are able to apprehend theos you can apprehend the beautiful and the noble, the exceptionally radiant, but a radiance surpassed by theos, and with that beauty unequalled with the noble defying imitation, as it is with theos. Such is the apprehension of theos, and thus is there an apprehension of the beautiful and of the noble, and since they are inseparable from theos they cannot be shared among other living beings. Thus a quest for theos is a quest for the beautiful, and there is only one path there: an awareness of the numinous combined with knowledge.

[6] Yet those who do not apprehend, who do not follow the path of awareness of the numinous, have the effrontery to declare that mortals are beautiful and noble even though they have not observed, and have no semblance of, what the noble is. Believing that what is bad is noble, they are subsumed by every badness and, thus glutted with it, are fearful of being robbed of it so that they in whatever way fight to not only keep it but to increase it.

Such are, Asclepius, for mortals the beautiful and the noble and from which we are unable to flee or despise. But what is most grievous to bear is that we are unable to live without them.

°°°

Commentary

Title.

῞Οτι ἐν μόνῳ θεῷ τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἀλλαχόθι δὲ οὐδαμοῦ. That In The Theos Alone Is Nobility And Not Anywhere Else.

The consensus is that the title is not original and was added by some scribe.

1.

The noble. τὸ ἀγαθὸν. As mentioned in the Introduction, I translate ἀγαθός not as some abstract (impersonal) and disputable 'good' but as, and according to context, nobility, noble, honourable.

no-thing. In respect of ἐν οὐδενί ἐστιν I have here (and occasionally elsewhere) used 'no-thing' - "no entity of any kind" - instead of 'nothing' or 'naught' to emphasize the ontological nature of what is expressed. In addition, as often in the Corpus Hermeticum, what is transliterated here as 'theos' - and by others translated as 'god' - can be taken literally to refer to 'the theos', 'the deity'.

...theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. The suggestion of the first sentence seems to be that 'the theos' is the origin of what is noble, and thus the origin of nobility, and that only through and because of theos can what is noble be presenced and recognized for what it is, and often recognized by those who are, or that which is, an eikon of theos. Hence why in tractate IV it is said that "the eikon will guide you,"; why in tractate XI that "Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos [the eikon] of Aion, the Sun [the eikon] of Aion, and the Sun [the eikon] of mortals," and why in the same tractate it is said that "there is nothing that cannot be an eikon of theos," and why in Poemandres 31 theos is said to "engender all physis as eikon."

then it... Referring to "what is noble".

quidditas. οὐσία. Here, a more appropriate translation of οὐσία - instead of 'essence' or 'substance' - is quidditas, as in tractate XI:2: "it is as if the quidditas of theos is actuality, honour, the beautiful..."

As I noted in my commentary on XI:2,

> Quidditas – post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity – is more appropriate here, in respect of οὐσία, than essence, especially as 'essence' now has so many non-philosophical and modern connotations. Quidditas is thus a philosophical term which requires contextual interpretation. In respect of οὐσία, qv. Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α:
>
> ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ᾗ αὐτά: ἡ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσά πως ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ.
>
> Given the foregoing, then principally – and to be exact – physis denotes the quidditas of beings having changement inherent within them; for substantia has been denoted by physis because it embodies this, as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changements predicated on it. For physis is inherent changement either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.

One interpretation of quidditas here is 'the being of that being/entity', with such quidditas often presenced in - and perceived via or as - physis.

changement...geniture. κινήσεως καὶ γενέσεως. cf. tractate XI:2 and my note above regarding οὐσία. As mentioned in my commentary on XI:2, "the unusual English word geniture expresses the meaning of γένεσις here: that which or those whom have their genesis (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else."

nothing that has come into being. In respect of τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν, cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, 191a27f: φασιν οὔτε γίνεσθαι τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν οὔτε φθείρεσθαι, διὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον μὲν εἶναι γίγνεσθαι τὸ γιγνόμενον ἢ ἐξ ὄντος ἢ ἐκ μὴ ὄντος.

lost. ἀπόλλυμι. qv. the title of tractate VIII, and my note regarding it.

bad...badness. κακός, κακίας. As with ἀγαθός not some moral impersonal disputable abstraction - in this case 'evil' - but the personal sense of some-thing or someone being bad, rotten, ignoble.

a partner who might harm him. Literally, "a partner to be harmed by." The exact nature of this partnership is not specified, although the following καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοῦ ἐρασθήσεται indicates a certain scenario. I have omitted the editorial emendation of οὔτε κάλλιον - "nothing is as beautiful."

2.

nothing of what is bad. Reading κακῶν with the MSS and not the emendation ἄλλων.

physicality. Given the context - ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἓν καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ζῴῳ τῷ πάντων μείζονι καὶ δυνατωτάτῳ - here πάθος, παθῶν, παθητῆς suggest a physicality, a physical actuality/occurrence, which the English word 'passion', with its often implicit anthropomorphism, does not quite express.

The author, in these first two sections, is making a distinction between their hermetic concept of theos and other living beings, especially mortals; of theos as detached from all those things - such as physicality, jealousy, anger - which mortals are subject to and with theos as described here is thus not only very different from the vengeful, angry, Jehovah of the Old Testament but also quite similar to, if not in perhaps some manner based on, the Hellenic concept as mentioned by Aristotle:

> ὥστε ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνέργεια, μακαριότητι διαφέρουσα, θεωρητικὴ ἂν εἴη: καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων δὴ ἡ ταύτῃ συγγενεστάτη εὐδαιμονικωτάτη. σημεῖον δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ μετέχειν τὰ λοιπὰ ζῷα εὐδαιμονίας.
> *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book X) 1178b.22
>
> Therefore the activity of theos, excelling others in bliss, is wordless-awareness [θεωρέω] and the nearest thing to that among mortals arises from good-fortune [εὐδαιμονία].

construction. cf. tractate II, ὁ οὖν θεὸς <τὸ> ἀγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα προσηγορία ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ πατρός, πάλιν διὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν πάντων. πατρὸς γὰρ τὸ ποιεῖν. (Thus theos is the noble and the noble is theos, although another title is that of father because the artifex of all being. For it is of a father to construct.)

not noble in other ways. That is, while Kosmos - qv. tractate XI for what or who this Kosmos may be - has nobility by the act of construction, of forming substance into beings, because some of those beings possess physicality then Kosmos unlike theos is not completely noble.

3.

in this place. I incline toward the view that ἐνθάδε here does not refer, as some have conjectured, to "here below" (qv. Plato, Gorgias, 525b: ὅμως δὲ δι᾽ ἀλγηδόνων καὶ ὀδυνῶν γίγνεται αὐτοῖς ἡ ὠφελία καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἅιδου) but rather just to "this place, here."

refine. καθαροῖς. cf. Poemandres 10, and 22. As I noted in my commentary on Poemandres 22:

> Literally [καθαροῖς] means 'physically clean', often in the sense of being in a state of ritual purification: qv. the inscription on one of the ancient tablets (totenpasse) found in Thurii - ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά χθονίων βασίλεια ("in arrivance, purified from the purified, mistress of the chthonic"). Since the English word 'pure' is unsuitable given its connotations - religious, sanctimonious, political, and otherwise - I have opted for the not altogether satisfactory 'refined'.

Here however, the choice of refine seems apposite, given the text:

> ἀδύνατον οὖν τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐνθάδε καθαρεύειν τῆς κακίας
>
> It is impractical in this place to refine the noble from the bad

This makes perfect (and practical) sense, in contrast to the fairly recent, conventional, and somewhat moralistic translation of Copenhaver: "the good cannot be cleansed of vice here below."

Interestingly, the Greek word καθαροῖς formed the basis for the relatively modern (c.1803) English term 'catharsis'.

physical body. cf. Poemandres 24: ἐν τῇ ἀναλύσει τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ὑλικοῦ παραδίδως αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα εἰς ἀλλοίωσιν (the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed).

restrained on all sides. παντόθεν ἐσφιγμένον.

each such thing. This might well be a reference to "restrained on all sides as it is by badness" - to bad things in general - and not to the immediately preceding "toil, grief, desire, rage, dishonesty, and unreasonable opinion."

the patron of all things rotten. I have omitted the very odd reference to "gluttony" - ἡ γαστριμαργία - which follows τὸ μᾶλλον ἀνυπέρβλητον κακόν, as in all probability it is a gloss. Nock, in his text, indicates a lacuna between the following χορηγὸς and ἡ πλάνη.

If the reference to gluttony is not omitted then a possible interpretation of the text would be: "Gluttony is the patron of all things rotten <...> the mistake in this place is the absence of nobility."

4.

or as theos is with nobility. In order to try and express in English something of the meaning of the Greek - and to avoid repeating "replete" (πλήρωμά), which repetition is not in the Greek text - I have slightly amended the word order. Nock indicates a lacuna between ἀγαθὸν τοῦ θεοῦ and αἱ γὰρ ἐξοχαὶ. The

transition between "replete with" and "the beautiful" is certainly abrupt.

For the eminence of the beautiful is around that quidditas. Although the Greek text here is rather obscure and various emendations have been proposed - none of which are entirely satisfactory - the general sense, of the beautiful surrounding or being near to the quidditas (οὐσία) of theos, seems clear.

tenuous depictions. The Greek words εἴδωλον and σκιαγραφία require careful consideration if one is not to read into the text philosophical meanings from other ancient authors which may not be relevant here, as might be the case in respect of εἴδωλον if one chose the word 'image'. In addition, if the English word chosen has other, perhaps more modern, associations then there may well be a 'retrospective re-interpretation' of the text, reading into it a meaning or meanings which also might not be relevant, as might be the case in respect of εἴδωλον if one chose 'phantom' given what that word now often imputes. Hence I have chosen 'tenuous' and 'depiction' respectively.

particularly the beautiful and the noble. Some text is missing in the MSS so that what follows οὐδὲ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν unfortunately remains unknown.

5.

quest. The sense of ζητέω here is more than that of a simple 'inquiry' or an 'asking'. It is to 'seek after' something with an earnest purpose, as in Matthew 2:13 where there is a desire by Herod to seek out and kill the infant Jesus:

> Ἀναχωρησάντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται κατ' ὄναρ τῷ Ἰωσὴφ λέγων· ἐγερθεὶς παράλαβε τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ φεῦγε εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ ἴσθι ἐκεῖ ἕως ἂν εἴπω σοι· μέλλει γὰρ Ἡρῴδης ζητεῖν τὸ παιδίον τοῦ ἀπολέσαι αὐτό.

awareness of the numinous. As I noted in my commentary on Poemandres 22:

> As with ὁσίοις, εὐσεβέω is a difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as reverent, pious - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism. The correct sense is 'aware of the numinous', and thus imbued with that sense of duty, that sense of humility - or rather, an awareness of their human limitations - which makes them appreciate and respect the numinous in whatever form, way, or manner they appreciate, feel, intuit, apprehend, or understand, the numinous, be it in terms of the gods, the god, Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ᾽ Ἐρινύες, God, or whatever. It is this awareness which inclines a person toward 'respectful deeds'.

6.

semblance. Here, ὄναρ suggests 'semblance' rather than 'dream'.

°°°

Appendix

Concerning Personal Pronouns

Regarding the interpretation of ancient texts - of translating an ancient language into English - there is the matter of personal pronouns with the convention being to default to the masculine singular (Man, his, he) even when the gender is not specified but only assumed, as in the matter of θεός in the sixth tractate where unlike some other tractates (such as Poemandres and tractate VIII) the term πατήρ does not occur.

Thus, conventionally defaulting to the masculine singular in sections 12 and 13 of tractate XI of the Corpus Hermeticum - based on the assumption that the MS reading ἄρχων καὶ ἡγέμων [1] and the title πρόδρομος refer to a man - one translates as:

> He creates all things [...] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for theos? If there is anything he has not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - he is incomplete, while if theos is complete and not otiose then he creates all things. [2]
>
> πάντα οὖν αὐτὸς ποιεῖ [...] εἰ γὰρ ἀποδέδεικταί μηδὲν δυνάμενον εἶναι, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ὁ θεός; εἰ γάρ τί ἐστιν ὃ μὴ ποιεῖ, ὃ μὴ θέμις εἰπεῖν, ἀτελής ἐστιν· εἰ δὲ μήτε ἀργός ἐστι, τέλειος δέ, ἄρα πάντα ποιεῖ.

However, if one uses the plural - non-gender specific - "they" as a personal pronoun then one has:

> "They create all things [...] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for theos? If there is anything they have not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - they are incomplete, while if theos is complete and not otiose then they create all things."

Which somewhat changes the meaning and is perhaps confusing for some, although the non-literal alternatives of "the theos" or "the divinity" are rather cumbersome:

> "The divinity creates all things [...] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for the divinity? If there is anything the divinity has not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - the divinity is incomplete, while if the divinity is complete and not otiose then the divinity creates all things."

An alternative would be the neutral if even more cumbersome phrase "that Being":

> "That Being creates all things [...] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for that Being? If there is anything that Being has not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - that Being is incomplete, while if that Being is complete and not otiose then that Being creates all things."

As I noted in my commentary on the phrase ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, given that in that tractate theos is not only referred to using the ancient honorific πατήρ [3] but also described as ἀρρενόθηλυς, as both male and female:

> "here, as often elsewhere, I have gone against convention (grammatical and otherwise) by, where possible, choosing neutral personal pronouns, thus avoiding sentences such as "And he who has self-knowledge..." This sometimes results in using third person plural pronouns - such as 'their' and 'they' - as if they were personal pronouns, or using constructs such as "the one of self-knowledge" or "whoever has self-knowledge". [2]

While I have in my translation here of tractate six used the conventional default of the masculine singular pronoun it might be an interesting exercise for those interested to provide a version using, where appropriate, gender-neutral personal pronouns, which undoubtedly would result in an interpretation of the text quite different from other translations available, my own included.

°°°

[1] Nock - *Corpus Hermeticum*, Third Edition, 1972 - has the emendation ἄρχοντος καὶ ἡγεμόνος.

[2] Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum I, III, IV, VIII, XI*. 2017.

[3] cf. τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων (Epistle of James, I, 17), "the father of phaos". In respect of phaos, qv. Poemandres 4-6; tractate III, 1 (φῶς ἅγιον), and tractate XI, 7.

Ὅτι οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἀπόλλυται
ἀλλὰ τὰς μεταβολὰς ἀπωλείας καὶ θανάτους πλανώμενοι λέγουσιν

That no beings are lost,
despite mortals mistakenly claiming that such transformations are death and a loss.

Tractate VIII

ooo

Introduction

The eighth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, concise as it is, provides an interesting summary of some of the tenets of the Hermetic weltanschauung. As, for example, in the mention of a first being (the primary theos) and of a second being (a theos) who is an eikon (εἰκὼν) of the first, and which first being - theos - is the artisan of all beings; and as, for example, in the mention of mortals having a natural empathy (συμπάθεια) with this eikon, this second being, who is identified as κόσμος, with κόσμος understood here, as in tractate XI, either as a personification, as a divinity, the theos - a deathless living being, ζῷον ἀθάνατον - who is the living cosmic order, or, as in the Poemandres tractate as simply referring in an impersonal manner to 'the cosmic order' itself.

While most other translators have opted here, as in other tractates, to translate κόσμος as cosmos (which English term suggests that the physical universe is meant) I incline toward the view that here - as in tractate XI - a divinity is meant, especially given how κόσμος is described: as "a second theos and a deathless living being," and as an eikon of the primary theos.

There are certain parallels with tractate XI and in which tractate it is stated that "Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos that of Aion, the Sun that of Aion, and mortals that of the Sun. It is said that changement is death since the body disintegrates with life departing to the unperceptible," (section 15) and, in section 14, that "Life is the enosis of perceiverance and psyche, while death is not the loss of what was joined but the end of enosis."

What therefore emerges from this, the eighth, tractate are two things: how we mortals are part of, and connected to, Kosmos and thence - since Kosmos is an eikon - to the first, the primary, theos, and how diverse the Hermetic weltanschauung is in respect of some details while nevertheless retaining an

underlying ethos.

°°°

Translation

[1] It is regarding psyche and the corporeal that, my son, we now must speak: of why psyche is deathless and how its vigour assembles and separates the corporeal. For there is no death of what-is, only an apprehension grounded in the denotatum 'deathless', either through unavailing toil or, by discarding the important part, that what is called deathless is deathful. That is, for the deathful there is a loss. But nothing of the Kosmos is ever lost, for if Kosmos is a second theos and a deathless living being then it is not possible for any portion of such a deathless living being to be lost since all beings of Kosmos are part of Kosmos, as most certainly are mortals, the noetic living being.

[2] In truth, the first is theos; the eternal, unborn. The second was engendered from, nurtured by, that being and rendered deathless and eikon of that being, as by an everlasting father, never-dying because deathless.

For never-dying is unlike everlasting. For that one was not a bringing-into-being by another although if there was a bringing-into-being it was his own bringing-into-being since he is always a bringing-into-being. For the everlasting - because it is everlasting - is all that is, with the father everlasting because of himself while Kosmos became everlasting and deathless because of the father.

[3] And the father endowed such substance as he gathered, extending it all to create something spherical, conferring upon it a particular quality, deathless and of substance everlasting. Having seeded such qualities and replete with semblances, the father enclosed them in the sphere as if in a cavern. His deliberation was to equip with each quality what would follow; to encompass with deathlessness everything corporeal so that substance would not by thelesis be separated from that bringing-together to thereby dissolve into its own disorder.

For when, my son, substance was incorporeal it was disordered even though that was restricted to other smaller qualities, to the kind of increase and decrease that mortals name death.

[4] For such disorder occurs with earthly-living beings, with celestial beings having one order allotted to them by the father from the beginning and maintained from disintegration by the periodicity of each of them, while the periodicity of earthly living beings is of a separation of their bringing together

and of the indissoluble corporeal; that is, of the deathless. Thus there is the loss of those influencing impressions and not the destruction of what is embodied.

[5] Now, as to the third living being, mortals, brought-into-being as eikon of Kosmos and who, because of the deliberations of the father and beyond the other living beings on Earth, have perceiveration and also empathy with the second theos and perception of the first.

For of the one there is apprehension as of the corporeal, while of the other there is an influencing impression as of the incorporeal and as of a noble perceiverance.

Then this life is not lost?

Speak softly, my son, and apprehend who theos is, who Kosmos is, what a deathless living being is, what a dissoluble living being is, and apprehend also that Kosmos is of theos and within theos and that mortals are of Kosmos and within Kosmos and thus that theos is the origin of, encompasses, and constitutes, everything.

°°°

Commentary

Title.

lost. ἀπόλλυμι. Lost, rather than 'destroyed' or 'perished'. They are not 'lost' because beings - entities/things - once brought-into-being - are still emanations of Being, of theos, even if their presencing, their form, is changed, transformed, morphed, as happens for example with those mortals who, via the anados mentioned in the Poemandres tractate, go beyond the seven spheres to, and then beyond, the ogdoadic physis.

1.

corporeal. σῶμα. Here, the context - qv. for example the following τῶν γὰρ οὐρανίων τὰ σώματα μίαν τάξιν ἔχει in section 4 and τοῦ δὲ ἔννοιαν λαμβάνει ὡς ἀσωμάτου καὶ νοῦ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ in section 5 - suggests corporeal rather than a literal body. A subtle distinction, between "of the nature of matter" and a specific type of "physical body". Compare also the fourth tractate: ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ

πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου, τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἄλλῳ τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. qv. Poemandres 14, tractate XI: 2, etcetera.

assembles. σύστασις. cf. Euripides, Andromache, 1088: τοῦθ᾽ ὕποπτον ἦν ἄρ᾽ ἐς δὲ συστάσεις κύκλους τ᾽ ἐχώρει λαὸς οἰκήτωρ θεοῦ.

In Poemandres 10 it is mentioned how "the logos of theos bounded to the fine artisements of Physis and joined with the perceiveration of that artisan." Thus a theme shared by several tractates is how the various 'artisans' of theos - and theos - skillfully craft beings from Being, as in tractate IV, Chaldron or Monas:

> Επειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ ὥστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα
>
> Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos, you should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, as One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

apprehension. νόημα. cf. Poemandres 3, "I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings."

denotatum. For προσηγορία. In this case, the denotatum - the naming - is the word 'deathless'.

or by discarding the important part [...] what is called deathless is deathful. ἢ κατὰ στέρησιν τοῦ πρώτου γράμματος λεγόμενος θάνατος ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀθάνατος. Literally, "by discarding the first letter it is called θάνατος [deathful] instead of ἀθάνατος [deathless].

Regarding τοῦ πρώτου γράμματος, what seems to be implied is that the mortal apprehension of 'deathless' does not include the most important - the correct - apprehension regarding death, which correct apprehension is explained by what follows.

Kosmos. κόσμος. As at Poemandres 7, κόσμος carries with it the suggestion that the cosmos is an ordered structure. However, here I construe κόσμος, as in tractate XI, as a divinity, the theos who is the living, deathless, cosmic order.

the noetic living being. τὸ λογικὸν ζῷον. The word λογικός imputes the sense of both the faculty of speech and the faculty of thought, something well-expressed by Sophocles: φθέγμα καὶ ἀνεμόεν φρόνημα καὶ ἀστυνόμους ὀργὰς ἐδιδάξατο

καὶ δυσαύλων πάγων ὑπαίθρεια καὶ δύσομβρα φεύγειν βέλη παντοπόρος, (Antigone, 355f).

2.

artisan of all beings. In respect of artisan (δημιουργόν) cf. Poemandres 9, and tractate IV: 1. Regarding "of all beings", cf. Poemandres 31, ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων.

eikon. εἰκὼν, qv. Poemandres 21 and 31, and tractate XI:15. Thus the suggestion is that is this eikon represents - presences, manifests - theos, the artisan.

never-dying...everlasting. In order to try and express the dissimilarity between ἀείζωος and ἀίδιος I have translated the former as never-dying (a sense suggested by ἀείζωον ὡς ἀθάνατος) and the latter as everlasting, a dissimilarity that is not immediately apparent from translations such as "the everliving is different from the eternal."

That one. Referring to 'the first' who engendered Kosmos as eikon.

not a bringing-into-being by another ... always a bringing-into-being. The text - with its repetition of ἐγένετο - is somewhat obscure, and various emendations have been proposed, none of which are entirely satisfactory. The sense seems to be of "that one" - the first - always having been, and is, and always will be, "a coming-into-being".

3.

such substance ... particular quality. The text is quite obscure and several emendations have been suggested, with Nock indicating that some text may be missing after τῷ ἑαυτοῦ, although ὑπ' αὐτόν seems reasonable. Any translation - whatever emendation is accepted - is conjectural.

The sphere may refer to Kosmos, cf. Poemandres 9,

> "Theos, the perceiveration, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiveration, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate."

The suggestion might thus be that these seven spheres are themselves enclosed within a sphere, which might explain Poemandres 13-14, "Having fully learned their essence, and having partaken of their physis, he was determined to burst out past the limit of those spheres [and] with full authority over the ordered

cosmos of humans and of beings devoid of logos, he burst through the strength of the spheres to thus reveal to those of downward physis the beautiful image of theos."

substance. ὕλη, qv. Poemandres 19, tractate III:1, tractate XI:3.

create. ποιέω, qv. tractate XI:5

semblances. Does ἰδέα here equate with the concept of 'form' as described by Plato? The consensus is that it does, even though such an assumption imposes a specific philosophical meaning on the text and even though the cosmogonic context - of the living Kosmos as eikon, of Kosmos made deathless by the father, and of theos, the father, conferring upon the sphere a particular quality - does not seem to support such an abstract, definite, concept. Thus, to avoid imposing a very particular meaning on the text, and given that the hermeticism described in this and in the other tractates represent varied weltanschauungen (albeit having a similar underlying ethos) rather than one well-defined philosophy, I have translated not as 'forms' but as semblances.

as if in a cavern. Does this refer to Plato's allegory of the cave, as so many seem to have assumed? Probably not, since - to give just one example - in the Βιβλιοθήκη of Pseudo-Apollodorus - written around the same time as this tractate - ἐν ἄντρῳ refers to a cave, or cavern, in which Maia, one of the seven Pleiades, gave birth to Hermes: Μαῖα μὲν οὖν ἡ πρεσβυτάτη Διὶ συνελθοῦσα ἐν ἄντρῳ τῆς Κυλλήνης Ἑρμῆν τίκτει. οὗτος ἐν σπαργάνοις ἐπὶ τοῦ λίκνου κείμενος.

deliberation. qv. Poemandres 8. As with the preceding *such substance ... particular quality*, the text here is quite obscure, and any translation - whatever emendation is accepted - is conjectural.

thelesis. θέλησις, qv. tractate IV:1. As noted in the commentary there, a transliteration to suggest something more metaphysical than a human type wish or desire. Such as that the physis - the being - of substance (ὕλη) might be such that without the intervention of theos it might naturally dissolve into disorderliness (ἀταξία).

4.

one order allotted to them. That is, celestial beings - those resident in and of the heavens - have a particular order distinct from that of ordinary mortals, but which order mortals can, via an anados such as described in the Poemandres tractate, journey to, discover, and become a part of.

the periodicity of earthly living beings is of a separation of their bringing together and of the indissoluble corporeal. While the periodicity of celestial beings is unchanging and is maintained from disintegration, the periodicity of

mortals is varied and involves the cycle, the separation, of life and death and yet also involves the reality of death not being an end - since what is deathless, the indissoluble part of what is corporeal, cannot suffer from disintegration.

influencing impressions. αἰσθήσεις. qv. Poemandres 22, and my commentary thereon, for what is meant is not simply 'the [bodily] senses' nor what is perceptible to or perceived by the senses but rather those particular impressions, conveyed by the senses, which may influence a person in a particular way.

what is embodied. The indissoluble part of what is apprehended as corporeal.

5.

perceiverance. νοῦς. Not 'mind', qv. Poemandres 2, tractate III:1, etcetera. As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 2:

> I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.
>
> Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action.

empathy. συμπάθεια.

perception. cf. Poemandres 18. An apprehension of the numinous, and thus of theos, of Kosmos as eikon, and so on.

there is an influencing impression as of the incorporeal and of a noble perceiverance. This refers to 'the first', to theos, the father; with the preceding "apprehension as of the corporeal" referring to 'the second', that is, to Kosmos.

Regarding ἀγαθός as 'noble/nobility', qv. my commentary on Poemandres 22. and especially the commentary on φανερώτερα δέ ἐστι τὰ κακά τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανεροῖς in tractate IV:9.

Thus theos is apprehended - understood, felt - in the same, mystical, numinous, way not only as the incorporeal is, but also as inherently noble.

Speak softly. εὐφήμησον. qv tractate XI:22.

(Kosmos is ...) within theos. ἐν τῷ θεῷ. Literally, 'within the theos'.

Νοῦς πρὸς Ἑρμῆν

From Perceiverance To Hermes

Tractate XI

The eleventh tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, the cosmogony in which Aion, Kronos, and Sophia feature. Second, possible links to the Poemandres tractate, given - for example - the mention of a septenary system and the supposition that Perceiverance - νοῦς - who addresses Hermes Trismegistus may well be Poemandres himself.

As with my translations of tractates I, III, and IV of the Corpus Hermeticum, I here transliterate certain Greek words, such as theos, in order to avoid what I have described as 'retrospective re-interpretation'.

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Translation

[1] Take account of this discourse, Hermes Trismegistus, remembering what is said for I shall not refrain from mentioning what occurs to me.

Because there is much difference among the many who speak about theos and all other things, I have not uncovered the actuality. Therefore, my Lord, make it unambiguous for me, for you are the one I trust in this.

[2] Hear then, my son, of theos and of everything: theos, Aion, Kronos, Kosmos, geniture. Theos brought Aion into being; Aion: Kosmos; Kosmos, Kronos; Kronos, geniture. It is as if the quidditas of theos is actuality, honour, the beautiful, good fortune, Sophia. Of Aion, identity; of Kosmos, arrangement; of Kronos, variation; of geniture, Life and Death.

The vigour of theos is perceiveration and Psyche; but of Aion: continuance and exemption from death; of Kosmos, a cyclic return and renewal; of Kronos, growth and abatement; of geniture, capability. Aion, thus, is of theos; Kosmos of Aion; Kronos of Kosmos; and geniture of Kronos.

[3] The foundation of all being is theos; of their quidditas, Aion; of their substance, Kosmos. The craft of theos: Aion; the work of Aion: Kosmos, which is not just a coming-into-being but always is, from Aion. Thus it cannot be destroyed since Aion is not destroyable nor will Kosmos cease to be since Aion surrounds it.

But the Sophia of theos is what?

The noble, the beautiful, good fortune, arête, and Aion. From Aion to Kosmos: exemption from death, and continuance of substance.

[4] For that geniture depends on Aion just as Aion does on theos. Geniture and Kronos - in the heavens and on Earth - are jumelle; in the heavens, unchanging and undecaying; yet on Earth, changeable and decayable.

Theos is the psyche of Aion; Aion that of Kosmos; the heavens that of the Earth. Theos is presenced in perceiveration, with perceiveration presenced in psyche, and psyche in substance, with all of this through Aion, with the whole body, in which are all the bodies, replete with psyche with psyche replete with perceiveration and with theos. Above in the heavens the identity is unchanged while on Earth there is changement coming-into-being

[5] Aion maintains this, through necessitas or through foreseeing or through physis, or through whatever other assumption we assume, for all this is the activity of theos. For the activity of theos is an unsurpassable crafting that no one can liken to anything mortal or divine.

Therefore, Hermes, never presume that what is above or below is similar to theos since you will descend down from actuality. For nothing is similar to that which, as the one and only, has no similitude. Never presume that he would delegate his work to someone else, for who else is the cause of life, of exemption from death, of Changement? What else but create?

Theos is not inactive for otherwise everything would be inactive; instead they are replete with theos, and there is nowhere in the cosmos nor anywhere else where there is inaction. Inactive is thus a vacant nomen in regard to a creator and what is brought into being.

[6] For every being there is a coming-into-being, each one in balance with its place, with the creator in all that exists, not found in just some nor creating only some but everything. His craft is in what he creates so that their coming-into

being is not independent of him but rather comes-into-being because of him.

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Correctly consider and observe Kosmos as suggested by me and thus the beauty thereof, a body undecayable and nothing more eldern and yet always vigorous and fresh, even more now than before.

[7] Observe also the septenary cosmos ordered in arrangement by Aion with its separate aeonic orbits. Everything replete with phaos but with no Fire anywhere. For fellowship, and the melding of opposites and the dissimilar, produced phaos
shining forth in the activity of theos, progenitor of all that is honourable, archon and hegemon of the septenary cosmos.

The Moon, prodomus of all of those, an instrument of Physis, of the changement of the substance below - with the Earth amid them all, a settled foundation of the beautiful Kosmos - and nourisher and nurturer of those on Earth.

Consider also the numerous deathless, and just how many, as well as deathful lives there are. And amid both the deathless and the deathful, the travelling Moon.

[8] All are replete with psyche, all in motion, some around the heavens with others around the Earth, with those on the right not toward to the left and those on the left not toward the right, not those above to below nor below to above. That all have come-into-being you do not, dear Hermes, have to learn from me, for they have bodies, psyche, motion, and to meld them into one is not possible without someone to bring them together. Such a one must exist and be, in every way, a unity.

[9] For, given dissimilar objects, motion is different and diverse with one hastiness appointed to them all, and thus it is not possible for there to be two or more creators for if there are many then such an arrangement cannot be kept. For the result of many is strifeful emulation of the stronger, and if one of two was the creator of changeable mortal living beings they would covet creating deathless ones even as the creator of the deathless would deathful ones.

If indeed there were two with one substance and the other psyche who would provide the creations? If both of them, which would have the larger part?

[10] Consider that every living being, deathful and deathless, and whether devoid of logos, is formed of substance and psyche, for all living beings presence life while the non-living are substance only. Similarly, psyche of itself from its creator is the cause of the living while the cause of all life is the creator of deathless beings.

What then of the living that die and the deathless ones? For why does the deathless one who creates deathless beings not create other living beings so?

[11] It is evident someone is so creating and that he is One; for Psyche is one, Life is one, Substance is one.

But who is it?

Who could it be if not One, the theos? To whom if not to theos alone would it belong to presence life in living beings?
Theos therefore is One, for having accepted the Kosmos is one, the Sun is one, the Moon is one, and divinity-presenced is one, could you maintain that theos is some other number?

[12] He creates all beings, and how supreme it is for the theos to create life and psyche and the deathless and changement, with you doing so many things, for you see, hear, speak, smell, touch, walk, perceive, and breathe. Yet it is not someone else who is seeing and another who is hearing and another who is speaking and another who is touching and another who is hearing and another who is smelling and another who is walking and another who is perceiving and another who is breathing, but one being doing all such things.

None of which are separate from theos. Just as you are not really living if you are otiose so would theos, if otiose - and it is not the custom to say this - no longer be theos.

[13] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for theos? If there is anything he has not created then - although it is not the custom to say this - he is incomplete, while if theos is complete and not otiose then he creates all things.

For a little longer, Hermes, give way to me and you will more readily apprehend that the work of theos is one: of everything brought-into-being; what is coming-into-being, what has come-into-being, and what will come-into-being. This, my friend, is Life; this is the beautiful, this is the noble; this is the theos.

[14] If you maintain this should be apprehended in deeds, consider when you seek to procreate, for it not the same for him since there is no delight, no colleague. Instead, a working alone, and forever working for he is what he creates. If ever isolated from it, everything would - because of Necessitas - fall apart, with everything dying because there would be no Life. But if everything is alive, and Life is One, then theos is One. While if everything is alive, and Life is One, then theos is One. Also, if everything is alive both in the heavens and on Earth and Life is One for them all as brought-into-being by theos and theos is that, then all are brought-into-being by theos.

Life is the enosis of perceiverance and psyche, while death is not the loss of

what was joined but the end of enosis.

[15] Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos that of Aion, the Sun that of Aion, and mortals that of the Sun. It is said that changement is death since the body disintegrates with life departing to the unperceptible. My dear Hermes, while I state there is changement in Kosmos because every day portions of it come-into-being in the unperceptible, it never disintegrates. These are the occurrences of the Kosmos, cyclicity and occultations; the cyclic a turning and occultation renewal.

[16] The Kosmos is polymorphous and forms are not imposed on it but rather, within itself, it is such changement. Since the Kosmos is polymorphous who created it and who would that be? Whomsoever cannot be without-form and yet if polymorphous would be akin to Kosmos and if only one form would be lower than Kosmos.

What therefore can be said without confusion given that there should be no confusion concerning apprehending theos? If there is a kind then it is a singular kind, incorporeal, and not subject to perception but revealed through the corporeal.

[17] And do not wonder about an incorporeal kind since it is akin to words, mountains which appear in depictions to be rugged but which when examined are flat and smooth. So heed these words of mine bold as they are but honest, for as mortals cannot be separate from Life, theos cannot be separate from creating nobility since for theos this creating is Life and motion, the movement of everything and the giving of life.

[18] Some of the matters spoken of require a certain apprehension, so consider what I say: everything is in the theos but not as if lying in a particular place - since the place is a body and also immovable and what is lain does not move - but an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise.

Thus apprehend what embraces everything and apprehend that the incorporeal has no boundary, that nothing is swifter, nothing as mighty, since the incorporeal is boundless, the swiftest, the mightiest.

[19] And apprehend this about yourself and so urge your psyche to go to any land and, swifter than that urging, it will be there. Likewise, urge it to go to the Ocean and again it will be swiftly there without passing from place to place but as if already there.

Urge it to go up into the heavens and it will be there without the need of any wings. Indeed, nothing will impede it: not the fire of the Sun nor Aether, nor the vortex, nor the bodies of the other stars, but - carving through them all - it will go as far as the furthest body. Should you desire to burst through The Entirety and observe what is beyond - if indeed there be anything beyond that ordered

system - then it is possible for you.

[20] Thus see how much might and swiftness you have. If you can do all those things then cannot theos? In such a manner you should consider theos as having all - Kosmos, The Entirety - as purposes within himself. For until you compare yourself with theos you cannot apprehend theos because what is similar can understand the similar.

Extend yourself greatly, immeasurably; leap beyond every body, surpass Kronos, become Aion, and you can apprehend theos. Having supposed that for you there is nothing that is not possible, regard yourself as deathless, capable of apprehending everything: every craft, all learning, the nature of every living being. Become elevated above every elevation, deeper than every depth. Gather within yourself awareness of every creation; of Fire and Water; the Dry and the Moist; and jointly be at all places on land, at sea, in the heavens. Be not yet born; in the womb; young; old; having died; what is beyond death.

And if you apprehend all that together - durations, places, occurrences, quality, quantity - you will be capable of apprehending theos.

[21] But if you enclose your psyche in your body and lessen it, saying "I comprehend nothing; have no power; fear the sea; am unable to go up into the heavens; do not know who I was and cannot know what I will be," then what is there with you and also with the god?

For, indulging the body and rotten, you are unable to apprehend the beautiful, the noble. To be completely rotten is to be unaware of the numinous, while having the ability to discover, to have volition, to have expectations, is the direct, the better - its own - way to nobility, and which you will encounter everywhere and which will everywhere be perceived whether you anticipate it or not: awake, asleep, at sea; whether journeying by night, by day, when speaking or when silent. For there is nothing that cannot be an eikon of theos.

[22] Do you affirm that theos is unperceived?

Speak softly. Who is more clearly revealed? He created everything such that in them you might discern him, for such is the nobility, such is the arête, of the theos, that he is revealed in everything. For nothing is unperceivable, not even the incorporeal, with perceiveration evident through apprehension, theos through creation.

So Trismegistus, let what has been revealed so far be apprehended by you, and if you consider other things in the same way you will not be deceived.

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Commentary

Title.

perceiverance. νοῦς. qv. my commentary on the term in Poemandres where I wrote:

> "The conventional interpretation [of νοῦς] is 'mind', as if in contrast to 'the body' and/or as if some fixed philosophical and abstract principle is meant or implied.
>
> This conventional interpretation is in my view incorrect, being another example of not only retrospective reinterpretation but of using a word which has acquired, over the past thousand years or more, certain meanings which detract from an understanding of the original text. Retrospective reinterpretation because the assumption is that what is being described is an axiomatic, reasoned, philosophy centred on ideations such as Thought, Mind, and Logos, rather than what it is: an attempt to describe, in fallible words, a personal intuition about our existence, our human nature, and which intuition is said to emanate from a supernatural being named Pœmandres [...]
>
> I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.
>
> Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action."

1.

The first paragraph of this section is spoken by Perceiverance [Noῦς], the second by Hermes Trismegistus.

theos. As with my translations of tractates I, III, and IV of the Corpus

Hermeticum, I here transliterate θεός rather than translate as God (as most others do) which translation in my opinion imposes a particular and Christian interpretation on the text given two thousand years of Christian exegesis regarding both God and the Old and New Testaments. A suitable alternative to 'theos' might be 'the god', which emphasizes that the theos described in this tractate is, like Zeus in classical times, the pre-eminent divinity. Occasionally, when the text warrants it - for example τῷ θεῷ and εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός - I have used 'the theos' instead of theos.

I have not uncovered the actuality. ἐγὼ τὸ ἀληθὲς οὐκ ἔμαθον. I incline toward the view that the sense of ἀληθής here is not some abstract (disputable) 'truth' but rather of the reality, the actuality, beyond the conflicting views, beyond appearance, and thus of uncovering - of learning - the reality of theos and other things.

2.

Aion. αἰών. A transliteration since the usual translation of 'eternity' imposes modern (cosmological and theological) meanings on the text, especially as αἰών can also imply a personification of a 'divine being', and 'an age or era' of long duration, or the lifespan of a mortal (as in Herodotus: πρὶν τελευτήσαντα καλῶς τὸν αἰῶνα πύθωμαι, Book 1, 32.5). In Aristotle, αἰών has specific meanings which the English term 'eternity' does not describe. For instance, in Περί Ουρανού where he writes: Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὔτε γέγονεν ὁ πᾶς οὐρανὸς οὔτ' ἐνδέχεται φθαρῆναι, καθάπερ τινές φασιν αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἔστιν εἷς καὶ ἀΐδιος, ἀρχὴν μὲν καὶ τελευτὴν οὐκ ἔχων τοῦ παντὸς αἰῶνος, ἔχων δὲ καὶ περιέχων ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν ἄπειρον χρόνον (Book 2, 1).

Which is somewhat echoed in this tractate in respect of Kosmos which is not just a coming-into-being but always just *is*, from Aion (γενόμενος οὔποτε καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος).

Interestingly, Jung used the term to describe a particular archetype, one which provides "intimations of a kind of enantiodromian reversal of dominants" as he writes in his *Aion: Researches Into The Phenomenology Of The Self*.

In addition, αἰών - as with the following χρόνος - might well be a personification, or an esoteric/philosophical term or principle which requires interpretation, as might κόσμος (Kosmos). Since κόσμος here does not necessarily imply what we now understand, via sciences such as astronomy, as the physical cosmos/universe it seems inappropriate to translate it as 'the cosmos', especially given expressions such as οὐδὲ ἀπολεῖταί τι τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τοῦ κόσμου ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐμπεριεχομένου.

Kronos. χρόνος. For reasons I have explained many times in my writings (for instance in Appendix I), I do not translate χρόνος as 'time', which translation seems to me to impose a particular modern meaning on the text given that for

centuries the term 'time' has denoted a certain regularity (hours, minutes) measured by a mechanism such as a clock and given that the term 'duration' is usually more appropriate in relation to ancient Greek texts where the duration between, for example, the season of Summer and the season of Autumn was determined by the observations (the appearance in the night sky) of certain constellations and stars.

geniture. γένεσις. The unusual English word geniture expresses the meaning of γένεσις here: that which or those whom have their genesis (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else. Alongside χρόνος, αἰών, and κόσμος, here γένεσις could well be a personification.

It is as if the quidditas of theos is [...] τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ ὥσπερ οὐσία ἐστὶ... Quidditas – post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity – is more appropriate here, in respect of οὐσία, than essence, especially as 'essence' now has so many non-philosophical and modern connotations. Quidditas is thus a philosophical term which requires contextual interpretation. In respect of οὐσία, qv. Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015a: ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ᾗ αὐτά: ἡ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσά πως ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ. [Given the foregoing, then principally – and to be exact – physis denotes the quidditas of beings having changement inherent within them; for substantia has been denoted by physis because it embodies this, as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changements predicated on it. For physis is inherent changement either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.]

In addition, I follow the MSS, which have τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ καλόν, ἡ εὐδαιμονία.

honour. ἀγαθός. That is, the substance of theos - in mortals - is manifest in the brave, in nobility of character, in what being noble means. Regarding ἀγαθός as honour rather than some abstract, disputable 'good', qv. my commentary (i) on Poemandres 22 and (ii) on τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαινόμενα τέρπει [...] φανεροῖς in section 9 of Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς (tractate IV), and (iii) Appendix II and III.

good fortune. εὐδαιμονία.

Sophia. σοφία. A transliteration, because - just like ἀληθής - it is not necessarily here something abstract, something disputable, such as 'wisdom' or 'good judgement'. Just as with Aion and Kronos, it might be a personification or used here as an esoteric term which thus requires contextual interpretation.

identity...arrangement. ταὐτότης...τάξις. An alternative for 'identity' would be

'form' (but not necessarily in the sense used by Plato and Aristotle) for the meaning seems to be that Aion provides the form, the identity, of beings with Kosmos arranging these forms into a particular order.

of Kronos, variation. See the note on Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α, above.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. As at Poemandres 14, not 'energy' given that the word energy has too many modern connotations and thus distracts from the meaning here. See also the note on 'activity' in section 5 where 'activity' is a more perspicacious translation.

cyclic return and renewal. ἀποκατάστασις καὶ ἀνταποκατάστασις. I take this expression as implying something metaphysical rather than astronomical; an astronomical meaning as described, for example, in the Greek fragments of a book on astrology by Dorotheus of Sidon (qv. *Dorothei Sidonii carmen astrologicum. Interpretationem Arabicam in linguam Anglicam versam una cum Dorothei fragmentis et Graecis et Latinis*, edited by Pingree, Teubner, Leipzig, 1976).

For there is a similar metaphysical theme in Poemandres 17 - μέχρι περιόδου τέλους (cyclic until its completion) - with apokatastasis becoming (possibly as an echo of Greek Stoicism) a part of early Christian exegesis as exemplified by Gregory of Nyssa who wrote ἀνάστασίς ἐστιν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἀποκατάστασις (De Anima et Resurrectione, 156C) where apokatastasis implies a return to, a resurrection of, the former state of being (physis) of mortals lost through 'original sin' and in respect of which returning baptism is a beginning.

3.

substance. ὕλη. qv. Poemandres 10. Given that the ancient Greek term does not exactly mean 'matter' in the modern sense (as in the science of Physics) it is better to find an alternative. Hence substance, the materia of 'things' and living beings. Thus 'materia' would be another suitable translation here of ὕλη.

The craft of theos: Aion. δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών. Aion as artisan who has, through theos, the power to not only craft Kosmos but also renew it, for Kosmos was/is not just a once occurring coming-into-being but is forever renewed: γενόμενος οὔποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνο.

On δύναμις as implying an 'artisan-creator' rather than just the 'power/strength' of a divinity, qv. the doxology in Poemandres 31.

From Aion to Kosmos. The suggestion is that 'the cosmic order' - Kosmos - is the work of Aion who/which is the source of, provides, 'the exemption from death' and the continuance of materia/substantia, the cyclic return and renewal.

4.

jumelle. διπλοῦς. As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 14, "The much underused and descriptive English word jumelle - from the Latin gemellus - describes some-thing made in, or composed of, two parts, and is therefore most suitable here, more so than common words such as 'double' or twofold."

psyche. ψυχὴ. Avoiding the usual translation of 'soul' which imposes various, disputable, religious and philosophical meanings (including modern ones) on the text. A useful summary of the use of ψυχὴ from classical to Greco-Roman times is given in DeWitt Burton: *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918).

Theos is presenced in perceiveration... The term 'presenced' expresses the esoteric meaning of the text better than something such as "theos is in perceiveration", especially given what follows: a description of the layers of being, of the whole, complete, cosmic, Body having within it other bodies, other layers or types of being, such as Kronos.

Within, it is filled; outside, it is enclosed ... a vast, fully-formed, life. The suggestion is that it - the cosmic Body - is enclosed, encircled, by psyche which fills the cosmos with Life.

It is possible to understand this mystically as an allusion to the difference between what is esoteric and what is exoteric, with 'within' referring to an inner/esoteric perception and understanding, and 'outer' as referring to the exoteric. That is, the exoteric understanding is of something vast, fully-formed, complete, and living (μέγα καὶ τέλειον ζῷον) while the inner understanding is of living beings who, "replete with psyche", are connected to theos through perceiveration. The exoteric perception is also described in the preceding "unchanging and undecaying" aspect of the heavens, with the esoteric referring to the "changeable and decayable" nature of living things on Earth.

5.

Necessitas. Although the Latin 'Necessitas' is a suitable alternative for the Greek, a transliteration (Ananke) is perhaps preferable (although less readable), because even if what is meant is not 'wyrd' - qv. Ἀνάγκης, the primordial goddess of incumbency, of wyrd, of that which is beyond, and the origin of, what we often describe as our Fate as a mortal being [cf. Empedocles, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Diels-Kranz, 31, B115] - English terms such as 'necessity' and 'constraint' are somewhat inadequate, vague, especially given what follows: εἴτε

πρόνοιαν εἴτε φύσιν καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο οἴεται ἢ οἰήσεταί τις.

Thus the term requires contextual interpretation.

physis. φύσις. An important theme/principle in the Poemandres tractate and in Aristotle, and a term which suggests more than what the English terms Nature - and the 'nature' or 'character' of a thing or person - denote. In respect of Aristotle, qv. Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α, quoted above in respect of my use of the term quidditas.

What physis denotes is something ontological: a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being.

activity. For ἐνέργεια here since the term 'energy' is - given its modern and scientific connotations - inappropriate and misleading.

crafting. See the note on δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών above.

descend down. In respect of ἐκπεσῇ, cf. Basil of Caesarea, Epistulae, Γλυκερίῳ: ἐκπεσῇ δὲ καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν μελῶν σου καὶ τῆς στολῆς.

changement. μεταβολή. I have here chosen 'changement' in preference to 'change' since changement (coming into English use around 1584) is more specific than 'change', suggesting variation, alteration, development, unfolding, transmutation.

Inactive is thus a vacant nomen. ἀργία γὰρ ὄνομα κενόν ἐστι. The unusual English word nomen - a direct borrowing from the Latin - is more appropriate than 'word' since nomen can mean a name and also a designation, for what is suggested is that in respect of someone who crafts, creates, things - theos - and what is created, brought-into-being, the designation and the name 'inactive' are not there. A suitable simile might be that of the second personal name (nomen) of a Roman citizen which designated their *gens* and, later, their status. Thus theos has no gens because theos is unique, and the status of theos cannot be compared to that of any other being because the status of theos is also unique.

In respect of ποιέω, I prefer 'create' rather than the somewhat prosaic 'make'.

6.

I am inclined to agree with Scott - *Hermetica*, Volume I, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924, p.210 - that after the end of the first paragraph of section 6 [For every being there is a coming-into-being … not independent of him but rather comes-into-being because of him] the tractate should be divided. Indeed, there might even have been a melding of two different tractates (or two different authors) given the contrast between the first and the second part.

undecayable. ἀκήρατος. That is, a privation of κηραίνω: decay, spoiled, perish. Undecayable is more apt here than 'undefiled' or 'pure' especially as Thomas More, in 1534 in his A Treatise On The Passion, wrote of "the infinite perfection of their undecayable glory."

eldern. For παλαιός. The Middle English forms of eldern include elldern and eldrin, and the etymology is 'elder' plus the suffix 'en'. In comparison to this rather evocative English word, alternatives such as 'ancient' seem somewhat prosaic.

7.

Observe also the septenary cosmos ... separate aeonic orbits. Nock - who as Copenhaver et al - renders αἰών as 'eternity' translates this passage as: Vois aussi la hiérache des sept cieux, formés en bon ordre suivant une disposition éternelle, remplissant, chacun par une différente, l'éternité.

phaos. As in my Poemandres - and for reasons explained there - a transliteration of φῶς, using the Homeric φάος. To translate simply as 'light' obscures the elemental nature of phaos.

no fire anywhere. As in the Poemandres tractate (qv. sections 4, 5, et seq.) not 'fire' in the literal sense but fire as an elemental principle. In the Poemandres tractate - which describes the origins of beings - Fire plays an important role, as at section 17,

> "those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Æther, the pnuema, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceiveration; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion."

fellowship. The meaning of φιλία here is debatable, as usual renderings such as 'love' and 'friendship' seem somewhat inappropriate given the context. It is possible it refers to a principle such as the one suggested by Empedocles where it is the apparent opposite of νεῖκος, qv. the mention of Empedocles by Isocrates (Antidosis, 15.268) - Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ τέτταρα, καὶ νεῖκος καὶ φιλίαν ἐν αὐτοῖς - and fragments such as 31, B35 and 31, B115 (Diels-Kranz: Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker) with νεῖκος implying 'disagreement' and φιλότης something akin to 'fellowship'.

The contrast between νεῖκος and φιλότης is also mentioned - interestingly in regard to the source of motion - by Aristotle in Metaphysics, Book 12, 1072a:

Ἐμπεδοκλῆς φιλίαν καὶ τὸ νεῖκος.

archon and hegemon. I follow the MSS which have ἄρχων καὶ ἡγέμων. Since both ἄρχων and ἡγέμων have been assimilated into the English language (ἄρχων c. 1755 and ἡγέμων c. 1829) and retain their original meaning it seemed unnecessary to translate them.

prodromus. πρόδρομος. Another Greek word assimilated into the English language (c. 1602 and appearing in a translation of Ovid's Salmacis and Hermaphroditus) and which retains the meaning of the Greek here: a forerunner, a precursor; a moving ahead and in front of.

the Earth amid them all. I incline toward the view that τήν τε γῆν μέσην τοῦ παντός does not mean that 'the Earth is at the centre of the universe' (or something similar) - since κόσμος is not directly mentioned - but rather that the Earth is in the midst of - among - all, the whole, (παντός) that exists.

foundation. I take the sense of ὑποστάθμη here to be 'foundation' rather than implying some sort of 'sediment', gross or otherwise.

nurturer. τιθήνη.

deathless, deathful. qv. Poemandres 14: θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. As there, I take the English words from Chapman's *Hymn to Venus* from the Homeric Hymns: "That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man."

travelling. ὑποστάθμη. The context suggests 'travelling', and 'going around or about' in a general sense, rather than 'circling' in some defined astronomical sense.

8.

all in motion. In a passage critical of Plato and in respect of motion, psyche and the heavens, Aristotle in his Metaphysics wrote: τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινοῦν: ὕστερον γὰρ καὶ ἅμα τῷ οὐρανῷ ἡ ψυχή, ὡς φησίν. (Book 12, 1072a)

in every way, a unity. cf. sections 10 and 11 of the Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς tractate (IV) with their mention of μονάς.

hastiness. ταχυτής. To translate as either 'speed' or 'velocity' is to leave the text open to misinterpretation, since the concept of speed/velocity as a measure (precise or otherwise) of the time taken to travel a certain distance was unknown in the ancient world.

10.

devoid of logos. qv. Poemander 10. As there, ἄλογος is simply 'without/devoid of or lacking in logos'. It does not necessarily here, or there, imply 'irrational' or 'unreasoning'. It might, for example, be referring to how logos is explained in texts such as Poemandres where distinctions are made between logoi, such as pneumal logos and phaomal logos.

In addition, I follow the MSS which have only καὶ τοῦ ἀλόγου.

presence life. ἔμψυχος. That is, are living; have life; embody, are animated by, life; and thus are not lifelessly cold.

psyche of itself [...] the creator of deathless being. Although the Greek wording is somewhat convoluted the meaning is that while psyche is the "cause of the life" of beings which are animated with life, it is the creator of deathless life who is the cause of all life.

What then of the living that die and the deathless ones? I follow the emendation of Tiedemann who has ἀθάνατῶν in place of θνητῶν.

11.

if not One, the theos. The phrase εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός occurs in Mark 10.18 and Luke 18.19. I have translated literally in an attempt to preserve the meaning, lost if one translates as The One God.

Theos therefore is One. I have omitted the following γελοιότατον - "most absurd" - as a gloss. In respect of 'One' here - εἷς - what is implied is not the numeral one but rather "not composed of separate parts", complete of itself, the opposite of 'many', and so on. That is, an undivided unity.

divinity-presenced. θειότης. This word imputes the sense of 'the divine (made) manifest' or less literally 'divine-ness' whence the usual translation of 'divinity'. I have opted for divinity-presenced to express something of its original meaning and its uncommonality.

12.

He creates all things. I have omitted the following ἐν πολλῷ γελοιότατον as an untranslatable gloss.

otiose. καταργέω. Since otiose implies more than being 'idle' or 'unoccupied' it is apt, implying as it does "having no practical function; redundant; superfluous".

13.

no one really exists without producing... Following the emendations of Nock, who has σε μηδὲν ποιοῦντα μὴ δυνάμενον εἶναι.

apprehend. νοέω. To apprehend also in the sense of 'discover'.

this is Life; this is the beautiful, this is the noble; this is the theos. ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο [...] ζωή, τοῦτο δέ ἐστι τὸ καλόν, τοῦτο δέ ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθόν, τοῦτό ἐστιν ὁ θεός. A succinct expression of the main theme of the tractate and of one of the main themes of the hermetic weltanschauung.

14.

enosis. ἕνωσις. A transliteration given that it is a mystical term with a particular meaning and describes something more than is denoted by the ordinary English word 'union'. It was, for example used by Plotinus, by Maximus of Constantinople, and was part of the mystic philosophy attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius, The Areopagite - qv. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Series Graeca. vol IV, 396A. 1857 - and denoted, for Plotinus, a desirable ascent (ἄνοδος) and a 'merging with The One', and for both the Areopagite and Maximus of Constantinople a self-less mystical experience of God.

15.

eikon. εἰκὼν. Another mystical term requiring contextual interpretation, cf. Poemandres 31, regarding which I wrote in my commentary: "I have transliterated εἰκὼν as here it does not only mean what the English words 'image' or 'likeness' suggest or imply, but rather it is similar to what Maximus of Constantinople in his Mystagogia [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence."

My dear Hermes. Omitting the following δεισιδαίμων ὡς ἀκούεις as a gloss.

occurrences. πάθη. I interpret this not in some anthropomorphic way - as 'passions' - but metaphysically (as akin to πάθημα), and thus as occurrences, events, happenings, that here regularly occur to Kosmos and which change and renew it despite (or perhaps because of) the change it undergoes. cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 1, 982b: οἷον περί τε τῶν τῆς σελήνης παθημάτων καὶ τῶν περὶ τὸν ἥλιον καὶ ἄστρα καὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς γενέσεως.

the cyclic a turning. The meaning here of στροφή is problematic. Given the context, my suggestion is 'turning' in the sense of a change that is positive and

possibility evolutionary, as πάθη can lead to positive change, in humans, in Nature, and in things.

16.

polymorphous. παντόμορφος. As for the rest of the sentence, vis-a-vis 'form', there is no adequate, unambiguous, word to re-present μορφή given how, for example, the English term 'morph' has acquired various meanings irrelevant here and given that the English term 'form' has associations with Plato when used to translate ἰδέα.

without-form. ἄμορφος.

kind. For ἰδέα. To avoid confusion with 'form' and because it is apposite here.

17.

incorporeal kind. In respect of ἀσώματος, cf. the comment about Socrates and Plato in Placita Philosophorum by Pseudo-Plutarch: τὸν θεὸν τὴν ὕλην τὴν ἰδέαν. ὁ δὲ θεὸς νοῦς ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου, ὕλη δὲ τὸ ὑποκείμενον πρῶτον γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ, ἰδέα δ᾽ οὐσία ἀσώματος ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ ταῖς φαντασίαις τοῦ θεοῦ. (1.3)

mountains which appear in depictions. I have chosen 'depictions' because depiction could refer to paintings on vases or to wall-paintings or to some other medium or art-form where mountains might be depicted, and it is not clear from the context which is meant.

18.

φαντασίᾳ. Not here simply 'appearance' in the ordinary sense of the term but a 'making visible' such that it is apprehended by us in a particular way, as a re-presentation of what it actually is. Hence: "an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise."

19.

urge your psyche to go to... The whole passage is interesting and evocative, with psyche here signifying 'spirit' as in "let your spirit wander to other places" and thus invoking something akin to what we now might describe as conscious imagination.

go to any land. Following the MSS rather than the emendation Nock accepts which is εἰς Ἰνδικὴν. There seems to me no justification for jarringly introducing India here.

Ocean. Ὠκεανός. That is, a sea beyond the Mediterranean, such as the Atlantic.

Aether. cf. Poemandres 17, ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε, where I noted in my commentary: "It is best to transliterate αἰθήρ - as Æther - given that it, like Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and pnuema, is an elemental principle, or a type of (or a particular) being, or some-thing archetypal."

nor the vortex. οὐχ ἡ δίνη. Presumably δίνη here refers to the celestial movement of the planets and stars as observed from Earth.

burst through. cf. Poemandres 14: ἀναρρήξας τὸ κράτος τῶν κύκλων, "burst through the strength of the spheres."

The Entirety. Even though 'universe' is implied, I have refrained from using that English word given its modern astronomical and cosmological connotations, and have instead opted for a literal translation of ὅλος.

ordered system. κόσμος here as 'the ordered system' just described: the land, oceon, Sun, the heavens, the bodies of the stars.

20.

purposes. νοήματα.

21.

enclose your psyche in your body. cf. section I of tractate VII where enclosing the psyche in the body is also mentioned.

indulging the body and rotten. φιλοσώματος here implies 'indulging the body' rather than 'loving the body' just as κακός implies 'rotten', 'base', rather than some abstract, disputable 'evil' or (vide Nock) "le vice suprême."

the numinous. τὸ θεῖον. In other words, 'the divine'.

its own (way). Following the MSS which have ἰδία, omitted by Nock.

eikon. Tentatively reading οὐδὲν γάρ ἐστιν ὃ οὐκ εἰκὼν θείου, which is not altogether satisfactory. The MSS have εἰκόνι. Nock emends to οὐδὲν γάρ ἐστιν ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν (there is nothing that it is not) which seems somewhat at odds with the preceding "to be completely rotten is..." and with theos/the numinous being evident, presenced, in τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ καλόν, ἡ εὐδαιμονία.

Regarding eikon, qv. the note in the commentary on section 15.

22.

speak softy. εὐφήμησον is a formulaic phrase (cf. Tractate XIII:8, ὦ τέκνον, καὶ εὐφήμησον καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐ καταπαύσει τὸ ἔλεος εἰς ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) suggesting "speak softly" and with reverence.

Περὶ νοῦ κοινοῦ πρὸς Τάτ

To Thoth, Concerning Mutual Perceiveration

Tractate XII

°°°

Introduction

While the first few sentences of the twelfth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum have some similarity to what Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, wrote in a polemic a century or two later [1], the rest of the twelfth tractate - with its mention of the Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων (the Noble Daimon), with its echo of Heraclitus, with its mention that "some mortals are deities with their mortal nature close to divinity," and with its themes of ψυχή (psyche) and ἀνάγκη (wyrd, 'necessity', 'fate') - is ineluctably part of Greco-Roman paganism, where by the term paganism I personally - following Cicero [3] - mean "an apprehension of the complete unity (a cosmic order, κόσμος, mundus) beyond the apparent parts of that unity, together with the perceiveration that we mortals – albeit a mere and fallible part of the unity – have been gifted with our existence so that we may perceive and understand this unity, and, having so perceived, may ourselves seek to be whole, and thus become as balanced (perfectus), as harmonious, as the unity itself." [3] Furthermore, this unity derives from 'the theos', the primary divinity, who gifted we mortals with life, and is manifest in - presenced by - other divinities, by daimons [4], and by what we have come to describe as Nature, that is, as the natural world existing on Earth with its diversity of living beings.

Furthermore, although, as with several other tractates, the name of Τάτ (Thoth) appears in the title, there is nothing in the text, or in the other texts of the Corpus, which points to native Egyptian influence; a lack of influence supported

by the recent scholarly edition of the ancient *Book of Thoth* edited by Jasnow and Zauzich [5], and by the earlier work of A-J. Festugiere [6].

°°°

[1] *Epistula de Decretis Nycaenae Synodi*, II, 3f, and IV, 22ff.

[2] "Neque enim est quicquam aliud praeter mundum quoi nihil absit quodque undique aptum atque perfectum expletumque sit omnibus suis numeris et partibus […] ipse autem homo ortus est ad mundum contemplandum et imitandum – nullo modo perfectus, sed est quaedam particula perfecti." M. Tullius Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, Liber Secundus, xiii, xiv, 37

[3] The quotation is from my 2014 essay *Education And the Culture of Pathei-Mathos*, and paraphrases what Cicero wrote in Book II (xiii and xiv) of his *De Natura Deorum*.

As I noted in the aforementioned essay,

> "it is my considered opinion that the English term 'balanced' (a natural completeness, a natural equilibrium) is often a better translation of the classical Latin *perfectus* than the commonly accepted translation of 'perfect', given what the English word 'perfect' now imputes (as in, for example, 'cannot be improved upon'), and given the association of the word 'perfect' with Christian theology and exegesis (as, for example, in suggesting a moral perfection)."

[4] A δαίμων was considered to be a divinity who undertook to protect places 'sacred to the gods' or who - following the deliberations of a particular deity or of various deities - undertook to intercede in the lives of mortals by, for example, bringing them good fortune or misfortune. It was thus a tradition in ancient Greece and Rome to, at a meal, toast with wine the Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων in the hope that he would bring them good fortune. Similarly, the Romans especially would offer a toast to the Ἄγνωστος Θεός (the Unknown Theos) and/or to the Ἄγνωστος Δαίμων (the Unknown Daemon) in the hope of not offending a deity or daimon whose name they did not know.

To translate δαίμων as 'demon' - as some do - is misleading, and can lead to a retrospective reinterpretation of the text given what the English term 'demon' now imputes as a result of over a thousand years of Christianity.

[5] Richard Jasnow & Karl-Theodore Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth: A Demotic Discourse on Knowledge and Pendant to the Classical Hermetica*. Volume 1: Text. Harrassowitz, 2005.

[6] A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 4 volumes. J. Gabalda, 1944-1954

Translation

[1] Perceiveration, Thoth, is of the quidditas of theos, if there is a quidditas of theos, and if so then only theos completely understands what that quidditas is. Perceiveration is thus not separated from the quiddity of theos but rather expands forth, as does the light of the Sun, with this perceiveration, in mortals, theos so that some mortals are deities with their mortal nature close to divinity.

For the noble daimon spoke of deities as deathless mortals and of mortals as deathful deities, while in living beings deprived of logos perceiverance is their physis.

[2] Where psyche is, there also is perceiveration just as where Life is there also is psyche. But in living beings deprived of logos, psyche is Life empty of perceiverance while perceiveration is the patron of the psyche of mortals labouring for their nobility. For those deprived of logos it co-operates with the physis of each, while for mortals it works against that.

Every psyche presenced in a body is naturally rotted by pleasure and pain for in that mixtion of a body the pleasure and the pain boil as profluvia into which the psyche is immersed.

[3] Whatever psyches perceiveration governs it manifests its own resplendence, working as it does against their predispositions. Just as an honourable physician painfully uses cautery or a knife on a body seized by sickness so does perceiveration distress psyche, extracting from it that pleasure which is the genesis of all psyche's sickness.

A serious sickness of psyche is neglect of the divine from whence prognostications and thence all rottenness and nothing noble. Yet perceiveration can work against this to secure nobility for psyche as the physician does for soundness of body.

[4] But the psyche of mortals who do not have perceiveration as their guide suffer the same as living beings deprived of logos, for when there is co-operation with them and a letting-loose of yearnings they are dragged along

by their cravings to be voided of logos, and - akin to living beings deprived of logos - they cannot stop their anger nor their emotive yearnings nor become disgusted by rottenness.

For such yearnings and anger are overwhelmingly bad. And on those ones, the theos - avenger, confutant - will impose what custom demands.

[5] Father, if that is so, then your previous discourse regarding Meiros seems at risk of being altered. For if it is indeed Meiros-decreed for someone to be unfaithful or desecrate what is sacred or be otherwise bad, then why is that person punished when they have been constrained by Meiros to do the deed?

My son, all that is done is Meiros-decreed with nothing corporeal independent of that. For neither nobility nor rottenness are produced by accident. It is Meiros-decreed that they having done what is bad are afflicted which is why it was done: to be afflicted by what afflicts them.

[6] But for now let the discourse not be about badness or Meiros; they are spoken about elsewhere. Instead, let us discourse about perceiveration; what it is able to do and how it varies. For mortals, it is a particular thing while for living beings deprived of logos it is something else. Also, in those other living beings it does not produce benefits. But because it can control the irritable, the covetous, it is not the same for everyone with it being appreciated that some of those persons are reasonable while others are unreasonable.

All mortals are subjected to Meiros as well as to geniture and changement, which are the origin and the consummation of Meiros,

[7] with all mortals afflicted by what is Meiros-decreed, although those gifted with sentience who - as mentioned - are governed by perceiveration are not afflicted in the same way as others. Because they are distanced from rottenness, they are not afflicted by the rotten.

What, father, are you then saying? That the unfaithful one, that the killer, and all other such ones, are not bad?

My son, the one gifted with sentience will, though not unfaithful, be afflicted as if they had been unfaithful just as, though not a killer, they will as if they had killed. It is not possible to avoid geniture nor the disposition of changement although the one of perceiveration can avoid rottenness.

[8] I heard that from of old the noble daimon spoke of - and would that he had written it for that would have greatly benefited the race of mortals since he alone, my son, as first-born divinity beholding everything, certainly gave voice to divine logoi - but, whatever, I heard him to say that all that exists is one, particularly conceptible things.

We have our being in potentiality, in activity, in Aion, whose perceiveration is noble as is his psyche, and with this as it is, there is nothing separable among what is conceptible. Thus perceiveration, Archon of everything and also the psyche of theos, can do whatever it desires.

[9] Therefore you should understand, relating these words to your previous question when you asked about Meiros. For if, my son, you diligently eliminate disputatious argument you will discover that perceiveration - psyche of theos - does in truth rule over Meiros and Custom and everything else. There is nothing he is unable to do: not placing a mortal psyche over Meiros, nor, if negligent of what comes to pass, placing it under Meiros. And of what the noble daimon said, these were the most excellent about all this.

How numinous, father; and how true, how beneficial.

[10] And now, can you explain this to me. You said that perceiverance in living beings deprived of logos is in accordance with their physis and in consort with their cravings. Yet the cravings of living beings deprived of logos are, I assume, somatic, and if perceiveration co-operates with the cravings and if the cravings of those deprived of logos are somatic then is not perceiveration also somatic, in alliance with the somatic?

Excellent, my son. A good question which I have to answer.

[11] Everything incorporeal when corporified is somatical, although it is properly of the somatic. For all that changes is incorporeal with all that is changed corporeal. The incorporeal is changed by perceiverance, with changeability somatic. Both the changing and the changed are affected, with one leading, the other following. If released from the corporeal, there is release from the somatic. In particular, my son, there is nothing that is asomatic with everything somatic with the somatic being different from the somatical. For one is vigorous, the other non-active. The corporeal, in itself, is vigorous, either when changed or when not changing, and whichever it is, it is somatic, However, the incorporeal is always acted upon which is why it is somatical.

But do not allow such denotata to vex you, for vigour and the somatic are the same, although there is nothing wrong in using the better-sounding denotatum.

[12] Father, that was a clear answer that you gave.

Take note, my son, of the two things that theos has favoured mortals with, over and above all other deathful living beings: perceiveration and logos, equal in value to deathlessness, and if they use those as required then there is no difference between them and the deathless. And when they depart from the corporeal they will be escorted by both to the assembly of the gods and the fortunate ones.

[13] And yet, father, do other living beings not have language?

No, my son, they have sounds, and language is quite different from sounds. Language is shared among all mortals while each kind of living being has its own sounds.

And also, father, among mortals for each folk have a different language.

Yes, my son, different but since mortal nature is One then language is also One, for when interpreted they are found to be the same whether in Egypt or in Persia or in Hellas. Thus it seems, my child, that you are unaware of the significance and the merit of language.

That hallowed divinity, the noble daimon, spoke of psyche in corporeality, of perceiveration in psyche, of logos in perceiveration, of perceiveration in the theos, and of the theos as the father of those.

[14] For logos is eikon of perceiveration, perceiveration that of theos, with corporeality that of outward form, and outward form that of psyche. The finest part of Substance is Air. Of Air, psyche. Of psyche, perceiveration. Of perceiveration, theos, with theos encompassing all things and within all things; with perceiveration encompassing psyche, psyche encompassing Air, and Air encompassing Substance.

Necessitas, forseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos, and of the arrangement of Substance, and whatever is apprehended is essence with that essence of each their ipseity. Of the corpora that exist, each is a multiplicity, and since the ipseity of combined corpora is the changement of one corpus to another they always retain the imputrescence of ipseity.

[15] Yet in other combined corpora there is for each of them an arithmos, for without arithmos it is not possible for such a bringing together, such a melding, such a dissolution, to come-into-being. Henads beget and grow arithmos and, on its dissolution, receive it into themselves.

Substance is One, and the complete cosmic order - a mighty theos and eikon of and in unison with a mightier one - is, in maintaining the arrangements and the purpose of the father, replete with Life. And through the paternally given cyclic return of Aion there is nothing within it - in whole or in part - which is not alive.

For nothing of the cosmic order that has come-into-being is - or is now or will be - necrotic since the father has determined that Life shall be there while it exists. And thus, because of Necessitas, it is divine.

[16] Thus, how - my son - in that eikon of all things with its repletion of Life can there be necrosis? For necrosis is putritude and putritude is perishment. How then is it possible for any portion of what is not putrid be be putrid or for

anything of theos to perish?

Therefore, father, do not the living beings - who have their being there - not perish?

Speak wisely, my son, and do not be led away by the denotata of being-becoming. For, my son, they do not perish but as combined corpora are dissolved with such a dissolving not death but the dissolution of the melding, and dissolved not so as to perish but for a new coming-into-being. For what is the vigour of Life if not change?

What then, of Kosmos, does not change? Nothing, my child.

[17] Does the Earth seem to you, father, to not change?

No, my son. But she is alone in that there are many changes but also stasis. For would it not be illogical if the nourisher - she who brings-forth everything - never changed? It is not possible for she, the bringer-forth, to bring-forth without being changed. It is illogical for you to enquire if the fourth parsement is inactive, since an unchanging corpus is indicative of inactivity.

[18] You should therefore understand that what exists of Kosmos is everywhere changing, either growing or declining, and that what is changing is living with all that lives not, because of Necessitas, the same. For Kosmos, in the entirety of its being, is not changeable even though its parts can be changeable, with nothing putrefiable or perishable, although such denotata can confuse we mortals. For geniture is not Life but rather alertness, nor is changement death but rather a forgetting.

Since this is so, Substance, Life, Pneuma, Psyche, Perceiveration, are all deathless, with every living being some combination of them.

[19] Because of perceiveration all living beings are deathless, and most certain of all is that mortals are, for they - receptive to theos - can interact with theos. For only with this living being does theos commune in nightful dreams and daylight auguration, forewarning what is possible through birds, through entrails, through the movements of air, and through trees of Oak. And thus do mortals profess to know what was past, what is now, what will be.

[20] Observe, my son, that every other living being inhabits a certain part of the world; in water for those of the water, on dry land for those on land, and above the ground for those of the air. But mortals employ them all; land, water, air, fire. They observe the heavens, and touch it through their senses, and theos encompasses and is within all such things, for he is Change and Capability.

Thus, my son, it is not difficult to apprehend theos.

[21] If you are disposed to consider him, then perceive the arrangement of Kosmos and how that arrangement is well-ordered. Perceive Necessitas in what is apparent and the foreseeing in what has come-into-being and what is coming-into-being. Perceive Substance replete with Life, and the great, the influencive, theos together with all the noble and the beautiful divinities, daimons, and mortals.

But those, father, are actuosities.

Yet, my son, if they are only actuosities then by whom - other than theos - are they actuose? Or do you not know that just as aspects of the world are the heavens, the land, the Water, and the Air, then in the same way his aspects are deathlessness, blood, Necessitas, Foreseeing, Physis, Psyche, Perceiveration, and that the continuance of all these is what is called nobility? And that there is not anything that has come-into-being or which is coming-into-being that is or will be without theos?

[22] He is within Substance, then, father?

If, my son, Substance was separate from theos then where, to what place, would you assign it? To some heap that is not actuose? But if it is actuose, then by whom is it actuose? And we spoke of actuosities as aspects of theos.

So who then brings life to living beings? Who deathlessness to the deathless? Who change to those changed? And if you say Substance or corpus or essence, then understand that they also are actuosities of theos, so that the substantiality is the actuosity of Substance, corporeality the actuosity of corpora, and essentiality the actuosity of essence. And this is theos, All That Exists.

[23] For in all that exists there is no-thing that he is not. Therefore, neither size, nor location nor disposition, nor appearance, nor age, are about theos. For he is all that exists; encompassing everything and within everything.

This, my son, is the Logos, to be respected and followed. And if there is one way to follow theos, it is not to be bad.

°°°

Commentary

Title.

Περὶ νοῦ κοινοῦ πρὸς Τάτ. To Thoth, Concerning Mutual Perceiveration.

1.

perceiveration. As with my other translations of Corpus Hermeticum texts I translate νοῦς not as 'mind' but as perceiveration/perceiverance, qv. my commentary on Poemandres, 2.

quidditas. οὐσία. Here, as with tractates VI and XI, 'essence' in respect of theos is not an entirely satisfactory translation given what the English term essence often now imputes. Quidditas is post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity, and requires contextual interpretation. As in tractate VI, one interpretation of quidditas is ontological, as 'the being of that being/entity', with such quidditas often presenced in - and perceived by we mortals via or as - φύσις (physis). Which interpretation has the virtue of avoiding assumptions as to whether the author is here presenting something similar to the Stoic weltanschauung or to other ancient weltanschauungen.

understands. In respect of οἶδεν as 'understand' rather than 'know' qv. 1 Corinthians 14:16, ἐπειδὴ τί λέγεις οὐκ οἶδεν: "since he does not understand what you say." Furthermore, in Plato, Meno, 80e 'understanding' and 'understand' make more sense than the conventional 'knowing' and 'know':

> ὁρᾷς τοῦτον ὡς ἐριστικὸν λόγον κατάγεις ὡς οὐκ ἄρα ἔστιν ζητεῖν ἀνθρώπῳ οὔτε ὃ οἶδε οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδε; οὔτε γὰρ ἂν ὅ γε οἶδεν ζητοῖ οἶδεν γάρ καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖ τῷ γε τοιούτῳ ζητήσεως οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδεν οὐδὲ γὰρ οἶδεν ὅτι ζητήσει.
>
> Do you realize what a contestable argument you introduce? That a mortal cannot inquire either about what he understands or about what he does not understand? That he cannot inquire about what he understands because he understands it with an inquiry thus not necessary; and that he cannot inquire about what he does not understand because he does not understand what he should inquire about.

quiddity of theos. οὐσιότητος τοῦ θεοῦ. Using the word quiddity here not as a

synonym of quidditas but as a synonym of 'quiddítativeness', where quiddítative is "of or relating to the essential quidditas of some-thing", in this case theos.

mortal nature. ἀνθρωπότης. I incline toward the view that the neutral term 'mortal nature' is appropriate here, given what the English word 'humanity' now so often implies; a neutral term suggested not only by the scholia to the first verses of Orestes by Euripides:

> κατασκευὴν ποιούμενος ὁ ποιητὴς τῆς ἰδίας προτάσεως τῆς ὅτι πάντα φέρει τὰ δεινὰ ἡ ἀνθρωπότης, ἐπιφέρει ὅτι καὶ αὐτοὶ οἱ μακάριοι καὶ ὄλβιοι δόξαντες ἄνθρωποι οὐκ ἄμοιροι συμφορῶν καὶ παθῶν γεγόνασιν· ἐξ ἑνὸς δὲ τοῦ Ταντάλου καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους παραδηλοῖ. τὸν Τάνταλον δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἄλλον τῇ ὑποθέσει προσείληφε διὰ τὸ ἐξ ἐκείνου τοῦ γένους καὶ τὸν Ὀρέστην κατάγεσθαι

but also by *De Sancta Trinitate Dialogus* of Athanasius (Migne, *Patrologiæ Græcæ*, 28, 1115), with the first verse of the Orestes expressing what is meant and implied:

> Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν δεινὸν ὧδ᾽ εἰπεῖν ἔπος οὐδὲ πάθος οὐδὲ ξυμφορὰ θεήλατος, ἧς οὐκ ἂν ἄραιτ᾽ ἄχθος ἀνθρώπου φύσις.
>
> There is nothing that can be described, no suffering, and nothing sent by the gods, which is so terrifyingly strange that mortal nature cannot endure it.

the noble daimon. Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων. The daimon who can bring good fortune (health, wealth, happiness, honour) and other benefits to mortals and who thus is considered to be noble. As mentioned in the Introduction, a daimon is not a 'demon'.

deathless...deathful. For these in respect of ἀθάνατος and θνητὸς qv. my commentary on Poemandres 14, tractate VIII:1, and tractate XI:7ff.

The phrase spoken by the Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων is similar to one attributed to Heraclitus:

> ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες. (Fragment 62, Diels-Krantz)
>
> The deathless are deathful, the deathful deathless, with one living the other's dying with the other dying in that other's life.

deprived of logos. ἄλογος. As at Poemandres 10 and tractate XI:10, a literal translation suggested by the context which thus avoids rather awkward expressions such as "animals without reason" and "irrational animals", and

which might also suggest not only various other meanings of logos such as "lacking (the faculty of) speech, lacking in sentience," but also that such living beings have not been gifted by theos with logos:

> τὸ ἐν σοὶ βλέπον καὶ ἀκοῦον, λόγος κυρίου, ὁ δὲ νοῦς πατὴρ θεός. οὐ γὰρ διίστανται ἀπ' ἀλλήλων· ἕνωσις γὰρ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ ζωή
>
> Then know that within you - who hears and sees - is logos kyrios, although perceiveration is theos the father. They are not separated, one from the other, because their union is Life. (Poemandres 6)

perceiverance is their physis. Reading ὁ νοῦς ἡ φύσις. Here φύσις implies their being - the type of being (the 'character') they have, and are - and thus means their quidditas, which quidditas is in contrast to that of theos, deities, and mortals.

2.

psyche. A transliteration, as in my translations of other tractates. It is possible to read the line as referring to personifications: "Where Psyche is, there also is Perceiveration just as where Life is there also is Psyche." Classically understood, psyche is the anima mundi, the power that animates - gives life to and which orders - the world.

in living beings deprived of logos, psyche is Life. On first reading there seems to be a contradiction between what follows - ἡ ψυχὴ ζωή ἐστι κενὴ τοῦ νοῦ, [in living beings deprived of logos] psyche is Life empty of perceiverance - and the preceding ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀλόγοις ζώιοιςὁ νοῦς ἡ φύσις ἐστίν, which states that "in living beings deprived of logos perceiverance is their physis." The sense of the Greek therefore seems to suggest that the perceiverance of living beings deprived of logos is a vacuous, empty, one: they perceive but it does not benefit them in the same manner as perceiverance benefits mortals because there is no understanding of, no rational apprehension of, what is perceived.

mixtion. σύνθετος. Mixtion is more appropriate here in such a metaphysical text than either 'composite' or 'compound', meaning as mixtion does compounded, combined; the condition or state of being mixed, melded, or composed of various parts.

profluvia. χυμός. That is, the bodily 'humours', anciently named as blood, phlegm, choler (χολέρα), and bile. Since the English word 'humour' now often suggests an entirely different meaning, I have chosen profluvia - from the Latin profluvium - in order to try and convey something of the meaning of the Greek, qv. Coleridge: "The same deadly sweats - the same frightful Profluvium of burning Dregs, like melted Lead - with quantities of bloody mucus from the Coats of the Intestines." *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1956. Volume II, 911: Letter dated 8th Jan.

immersed. βαπτίζω. Cf. tractate IV:3: καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, "and were immersive with perceiveration."

3.

cautery or a knife. καίων ἢ τέμνων. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 848-850,

> ὅτῳ δὲ καὶ δεῖ φαρμάκων παιωνίων,
> ἤτοι κέαντες ἢ τεμόντες εὐφρόνως
> πειρασόμεσθα πῆμ᾽ ἀποστρέψαι νόσου
>
> Whomsoever needs a healing potion
> By a burning-out or a well-judged cutting-away
> I shall seek to defeat the sickness of that injury.

neglect of the divine. ἀθεότης. The usual translation, atheism, seems to me to impose a particular and rigid meaning on the text given the association the word atheism now has with Christianity and in modern philosophy. The phrase 'neglect of the divine' expresses a more Hellenistic view, qv. the term ἀθεράπευτος and also Plutarch, who wrote:

> Οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος, ἡ μὲν ἀθεότης κρίσις οὖσα φαύλη τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον εἰς ἀπάθειάν τινα δοκεῖ τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ τοῦ θείου περιφέρειν, καὶ τέλος ἐστὶν αὐτῇ τοῦ μὴ νομίζειν θεοὺς τὸ μὴ φοβεῖσθαι, *De Superstitione*, 165b
>
> Thus we return to our topic, neglect of the divine, which is the bad decision that nothing is hallowed or everlasting, which with its disbelief in the divine seems to lead to a type of apathy with the result that there is no fear of divinity since it does not exist.

4.

for when there is co-operation with them…voided of logos. The Greek here is somewhat obscure, although the meaning seems to be along the following lines: when perceiveration co-operates with a serious sickness such as neglect of the divine then yearnings, desires, are given free reign so that those mortals, haplessly carried away by their cravings, become just like animals, voided of what makes them human.

what custom demands. In respect of νομός the term 'law' - with all its modern and Old Testament associations (as in 'the law of God') - is inappropriate since the Greek term implies what it is the customary thing to do. Hence, "what custom demands."

5.

Meiros. While μείρομαι here is conventionally understood as referring to 'fate', given the variety of meanings attributed to that term - a useful summary of classical usage is given in Book I, chapter XXVII of *Placita Philosophorum* attributed to the Pseudo-Plutarch - it seems apposite to suggest an alternative, especially as the text apparently does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question which Thoth goes on to ask: if 'fate' does compel someone to do something bad then why are they punished?

The mention of ἀνάγκης - 'Necessity', Ananke - in what follows (section 14: ἀνάγκη δὲ καὶ ἡ πρόνοια καὶ ἡ φύσις ὄργανά ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῆς τάξεως τῆς ὕλης) might indicate the Heraclitean sense of μείρομαι, as summarized by the Pseudo-Plutarch,

> Ἡράκλειτος πάντα καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην, τὴν δ᾽ αὐτὴν ὑπάρχειν καὶ ἀνάγκην.

Yet the immediate context - ἔλεγχον ὁ θεὸς ἐπέστησε τὸν νόμον - might seem to suggest θέσφατον (divine decree), as for example in Sophocles:

> "εἴ τι θέσφατον πατρὶ χρησμοῖσιν ἱκνεῖθ᾽ ὥστε πρὸς παίδων θανεῖν."
> *Oedipus at Colonus*, 969-970

However, given that what follows - Εἱμαρμένης γὰρ πάντα τὰ ἔργα [...] καὶ χωρὶς ἐκείνης οὐδέν ἐστι τῶν σωματικῶν - I have chosen to use a transliteration, Meiros, based on the personification Moros in Hesiod's Theogony:

> νὺξ δ᾽ ἔτεκεν στυγερόν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαιναν καὶ Θάνατον,
> τέκε δ᾽ Ὕπνον, ἔτικτε δὲ φῦλον Ὀνείρων (211-212)
>
> And Night gave birth to odious Moros, to darksome Kir and to Death,
> and also brought-into-being Hypnos and the folk of Dreams.

While the transliteration Meiros has the undoubted advantage - as with logos, theos, physis, και τα λοιπά - of requiring contextual interpretation and thus avoiding whatever presumptions the reader might have in respect of the meaning of the English term 'fate', it has the disadvantage of not having, in English, an appropriate suffix such as, in respect of fate, -ed allowing as that does εἱμαρτός to be translated by 'fated'. The only solution - somewhat awkward as it is - is to translate such a word by a term such as 'Meiros-decreed' (or Meiros-appointed) so that the phrase εἰ δ᾽ ἄρα τις οὗτος εἱμαρτὸς ἥκει χρόνος (Plutarch, Alexander, 30.6) would approximate to "if indeed a Meiros appointed moment has now arrived."

unfaithful. The sense of μοιχεύω is not stridently moralistic, as the English term adultery - with all its Old Testament associations - now often still denotes and

has for centuries denoted with its implication of 'sin'. Rather, the sense is more anciently pagan: of marital unfaithfulness, of a personal (and thus dishonourable) betrayal, as in Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1374a, συγγενέσθαι ἀλλ᾽ οὐ μοιχεῦσαι (not unfaithful in the matter of [sexual] intercourse). Similarly in Aristophanes:

> ὁ δ᾽ ἁλούς γε μοιχὸς διὰ σέ που παρατίλλεται. (Plutus, 170)
>
> it will be because of you if the unfaithful one is caught, and their head shaved.

In addition, in origin the Anglo-Norman word adulterie - derived as it was from the Latin adulterium (adulteration, contaminating or debasing something) - simply meant marital unfaithfulness without the later religious associations such as voiced by Thomas More in his 1532 work The Confutacyon of Tyndales Answere: "wedlokke [...] whyche god hym selfe bothe blessed and commaunded in paradyse and whyche holy scrypture commendeth where it sayth that wedlokke is honorable where the bedde is vndefyled wyth auowtry." (ccliii)

what is bad. Reading τὸ κακὸν and not τὸ καλὸν.

6.

geniture and changement. γενέσει καὶ μεταβολῆι. In respect of geniture, qv. my commentary on tractate XI:2, that "the unusual English word geniture expresses the meaning of γένεσις here: that which or those whom have their genesis (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else."

In respect of changement, as I noted in a comment on tractate XI:4, "I have here chosen 'changement' in preference to 'change' since changement (coming into English use around 1584) is more specific than 'change', suggesting variation, alteration, development, unfolding, transmutation."

7.

gifted with sentience. ἔλλογος. The Greek term occurs in the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle where he discusses the views of Eudoxus:

> εὔδοξος μὲν οὖν τὴν ἡδονὴν τἀγαθὸν ὤετ᾽ εἶναι διὰ τὸ πάνθ᾽ ὁρᾶν ἐφιέμενα αὐτῆς καὶ ἔλλογα καὶ ἄλογα (1172b.10)
>
> Eudoxus considered that delight was the beneficent since his perception was that all, sentient or not sentient, saught it.

In a comment on this passage from Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas wrote:

> quod Eudoxus existimabat delectationem esse de genere bonorum,

> quia videbat quod omnia desiderant ipsam, tam rationalia scilicet homines, quam irrationalia, scilicet bruta animalia. (*Sententia libri Ethicorum*, Book X, l. 2 n. 2)

where the contrast, as in Aristotle, is between those gifted with sentience and those lacking sentience, but with Aquinas adding that the latter are 'dumb' animals (brutis animalibus), a difference between humans and animals that he considers in detail in his Summa Theologiae (Prima Secundae, Quaestiones 6-17).

killer. φονεὺς. To use the English word 'murderer' as a translation of the Greek carries with it relatively modern connotations that in my opinion are inappropriate, given that the word 'murder' can impute the sense of "the deliberate and unlawful killing of a human being" and "the action of killing or causing destruction of life, regarded as wicked and morally reprehensible irrespective of its legality."

The classical sense is evident, for example, in Sophocles:

> φονέα σε φημὶ τἀνδρὸς οὗ ζητεῖς κυρεῖν (Oedipus Tyrannus, 362)
>
> I said you are the killer and thus the man you seek
>
> κἀνταῦθ᾽ Ἀπόλλων οὔτ᾽ ἐκεῖνον ἤνυσεν
> φονέα γενέσθαι πατρὸς οὔτε Λάϊον
> τὸ δεινὸν οὐφοβεῖτο πρὸς παιδὸς θανεῖν (Oedipus Tyrannus, 720-702)
>
> So, in those days, Apollo did not bring about, for him,
> That he slay the father who begot him - nor, for Laius,
> That horror which he feared - being killed by his son.

Thus the choice is between two relatively neutral terms: killer, and slayer. Neither of which imputes the moralistic or legal sense of "unlawful killing" or of the act being "wicked and morally reprehensible." Instead, it is a statement of fact.

the one gifted with sentience will, though not unfaithful, be afflicted... just as, though not a killer, they will as if they had killed. An interesting passage which might be taken to mean that those gifted with sentience - who presumably are also, as the tractate states, "governed/guided by their perceiveration" - have the ability because of such things to know, understand, to intuit, what killing and unfaithfulness mean and imply (especially in terms of affliction) as if they themselves had done such things. That is, they have empathy, and thus can avoid doing what is bad.

disposition. See the note regarding ποιότης in section 23 below.

8.

the noble daimon spoke of...would that he had written it. This seems to allude to an aural tradition, perhaps (qv. my introduction to tractate III) an Ιερός Λόγος, which was never written down, with the suggestion that what is being recounted in this tractate is such a tradition.

first-born divinity. πρωτόγονος θεός. While some assume that this refers to something Egyptian - for example, to the deity Khnum - I incline toward the view that it may be (i) a reference to an Orphic tradition, given that there is an Orphic poem which beings Πρωτόγονον καλέω διφυῆ μέγαν αἰθερόπλαγκτον, or (ii) more probably a term still in general use in Hellenic culture given it that was, for example, an epithet of the goddess Persephone, and given that it occurs in the commentary on Plato's Timaeus by Proclus.

divine logoi. θείους λόγους. Cf. τοὺς λόγους διδάσκων and σοφίας λόγους in Poemandres 29. There, the logoi are the various forms (or emanations) of the logos, and include the pneumal logos, the phaomal logos, and the logos kyrios.

> I [...] thus became a guide to those of my kind, informing them of the logoi - of the way and the means of rescue - and engendered in them the logoi of sapientia, with the celestial elixir to nurture them. (Poemandres 29)

conceptible things. νοητὰ σώματα. That is, objects - things, materia, 'bodies' - which can be conceived of, which are conceptible, rather than having been physically seen, qv. the 'atoms' of Democritus: ἐτεῇι δὲ ἄτομα καὶ κενόν. See also Sextus Empiricus: οἱ γὰρ ἀτόμους εἰπόντες ἢ ὁμοιομερείας ἢ ὄγκους ἢ κοινῶς νοητὰ σώματα πάντων τῶν ὄντων κατώρθωσαν πῇ δὲ διέπεσον (Adversus Mathematicos, X, 252).

We have our being in potentiality, in activity, in Aion. ζῶμεν δὲ δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείαι καὶ Αἰῶνι. In respect of Aion, qv. tractate XI:3,

> πηγὴ μὲν οὖν πάντων ὁ θεός, οὐσία δὲ ὁ αἰών, ὕλη δὲ ὁ κόσμος, δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών, ἔργον δὲ τοῦ αἰῶνος ὁ κόσμος, γενόμενος οὔποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος·
>
> The foundation of all being is theos; of their quidditas, Aion; of their substance, Kosmos. The craft of theos: Aion; the work of Aion: Kosmos, which is not just a coming-into-being but always is, from Aion.

nothing separable. οὐδὲν διαστατὸν. As noted in respect of διαστατός in the commentary on tractate IV:1, "what is not meant is 'dimension', given what the term 'dimension' now imputes scientifically and otherwise."

Archon. Cf. the MS reading ἄρχων καὶ ἡγέμων (archon and hegemon) in tractate XI:7. Since ἄρχων has been assimilated into the English language and

retained (c. 1755) its original meaning (ruler, governer, regent) it seems unnecessary to translate the term.

perceiveration...whatever it desires. Cf Poemandres 12: ὁ δὲ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ Νοῦς ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς... Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all...

9.

Numinous. θεῖος. As at tractate IV:6 I have opted for the English word numinous - which dates from 1647, derived from the classical Latin *numen* - to express the meaning of θεῖος here.

10.

somatic. πάθος. The English word somatic - from the Greek σῶμα - means "of or relating to the body; physical, corporeal". As in tractate VI:2 the sense of πάθος here is one of physicality, as in being physically afflicted or affected such that a 'living being deprived of logos' cannot control or affect the affliction, in this instance their cravings. As such, the English word 'passion' is inappropriate here as a translation of πάθος because it implies strong or deep feelings or emotions generally in human beings and thus is somewhat anthropomorphic, especially as a distinction is being made, as in sections 2 and 5, between mortals and those living beings, such as animals, who lack logos, which logos together with perceiveration, are - as mentioned in section 12 - the two most precious gifts theos has given to mortals: ὅτι δύο ταῦτα τῶι ἀνθρώπωι ὁ θεὸς παρὰ πάντα τὰ θνητὰ ζῶια ἐχαρίσατο τόν τε νοῦν καὶ τὸν λόγον, σότιμα τῆι ἀθανασίαι.

in alliance with the somatic. Reading συγχρηματίζων with the MSS and not the emendation συγχρωτίζων.

11.

corporeal, incorporeal. σῶμα, ἀσώματος. To try and express at least something of the meaning of the Greek here - which is somewhat metaphysically obscure - I have occasionally resorted to obsolete forms of those two English terms, such as 'corporified' (from corporify) implying "having a material or a bodily form".

In respect of the corporeal and the incorporeal, see tractates VIII and XI. In VIII one of the main themes is the corporeal: "It is regarding psyche and the corporeal that we now must speak..." In XI:22 it is stated that

> οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀόρατον, οὐδὲ τῶν ἀσωμάτων· νοῦς ὁρᾶται ἐν τῶι νοεῖν, ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῶι ποιεῖν
>
> nothing is unperceivable, not even the incorporeal, with perceiveration evident through apprehension, theos through creation.

somatical. παθητά. The sense is of being affected by, or subject to, what is somatic. As what follows - καὶ κυρίως αὐτά ἐστι πάθη - attempts to explain, and as is made clear later on in this section (διαφέρει δὲ πάθος παθητοῦ) somatical should not be confused with somatic.

changes, changed. Given the context, the various senses of κίνησις here are change, not motion - moving, move - in the physical sense as at tractate XI:8, πάντα δὲ πλήρη ψυχῆς καὶ πάντα κινούμενα, τὰ μὲν περὶ τὸν οὐρανόν, τὰ δὲ περὶ τὴν γῆν, all are replete with psyche, all in motion, some around the heavens with others around the Earth.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. Qv. Poemandres 14 and 15. The English terms energy and energize have too many modern, irrelevant, connotations, in respect of the science of physics and otherwise.

12.

perceiveration and logos. Omitting - with Patrizi - the following τὸν δὲ προφορικὸνλόγον ἔχει as a gloss.

deathlessness. In respect of this unusual English word, qv. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Soul's Travelling* (IX),

> "And as they touch your soul, they borrow
> Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,
> That deathly odour with which the clay
> Leaves on its deathlessness alway."

denotata, denotatum. προσηγορία here implies more than 'name'. That is, a terminology; a specialized vocabulary, in this case one related to metaphysics (qv. πλανώμενος τῆι προσηγορίαι τοῦ γινομένου in section 16). Hence the translations 'denotata' and denotatum (singular) to suggest this.

13.

And yet, do other livings not have language. τὰ γὰρ ἄλλα ζῶια λόγωι οὐ χρᾶται. While λόγος here is generally taken to mean 'speech', given what follows with its mention of animals making 'sounds' and the exposition regarding the different languages spoken by mortals, the translation 'language' is more apt, as in being able to communicate, to say something specific the meaning of which can be explained and understood by diverse others. A usage of λόγος as for example in the following exchange between Oedipus and the Chorus:

> Οἰδίπους:
>
> οἶσθ᾽ οὖν ἃ χρήζεις.

Χορός:

οἶδα.

Οἰδίπους:

φράζε δὴ τί φής.

Χορός:

τὸν ἐναγῆ φίλον μήποτ᾽ ἐν αἰτίᾳ σὺν ἀφανεῖ λόγῳ σ᾽ ἄτιμον βαλεῖν.

Oedipus:

Do you know what it is that you so desire?

Chorus:

I do know.

Oedipus:

Then explain what you believe it to be.

Chorus:

When a comrade is under oath, you should never accuse him because of unproved rumours and brand him as being without honour.

(Oedipus Tyrannus, vv. 653-657)

folk. ἔθνος. Since the English term 'nation' now implies things which the Greek word does not - such as a modern political State - it is inappropriate here. A suitable alternative to folk would be 'people'.

mortal nature, Qv. section 1.

one. εἷς. It is probable that this refers to a metaphysical concept such as described in tractate XI:11,

καὶ ὅτι μὲν ἔστι τις ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα δῆλον· ὅτι δὲ καὶ εἷς, φανερώτατον· καὶ γὰρ μία ψυχὴ καὶ μία ζωὴ καὶ μία ὕλη. τίς δὲ οὗτος; τίς δὲ ἂν ἄλλος εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός; τίνι γὰρ ἄλλωι ἂν καὶ πρέποι ζῶια ἔμψυχα ποιεῖν, εἰ μὴ μόνωι τῶι θεῶι; εἷς οὖν θεός καὶ τὸν μὲν κόσμον ὡμολόγησας ἀεὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἕνα καὶ τὴν σελήνην μίαν καὶ θειότητα μίαν, αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν θεὸν πόστον εἶναι θέλεις

It is evident someone is so creating and that he is One; for Psyche is one, Life is one, Substance is one. But who is it? Who could it be if not One, the theos? To whom if

> not to theos alone would it belong to presence life in living beings? Theos therefore is One, for having accepted the Kosmos is one, the Sun is one, the Moon is one, and divinity-presenced is one, could you maintain that theos is some other number?

psyche in corporeality. The context is indicative of σώματι here referring to corporeality in general; that is, the quality or state of being corporeal; bodily form or nature; materiality.

14.

eikon. εἰκὼν, qv. my commentary on Poemandres 21 and 31, and also see tractate VIII:2 and tractate XI:15.

outward form. ἰδέα. To translate here simply as 'form' (or idea) may give the impression that the ἰδέα of Plato may be meant with the text thus interpreted in accord with his philosophy and especially with what has been termed his 'theory of forms'. However, since the reference here is to corporeality in the context of perceiveration as εἰκὼν of theos, a more metaphysical sense is suggested. Hence, my interpretation as 'outward form', which thus leaves open the question as to whether or not there is any correlation with 'the theory of forms'.

substance. ὕλη. That is, the materia of 'things' and living beings. Qv. Poemandres 10 and tractate III:1.

Air. ἀήρ. Air as a fundamental element, hence the capitalization as with the preceding Substance.

necessitas. ἀνάγκη. In myth, Ananke was the ancient goddess of wyrd, thus having power over Meiros ('fate') and of what is considered necessary for mortals (such as death), hence the translation of 'necessity'. As mentioned in my commentary on tractate XII:5, although the Latin 'Necessitas' is a suitable alternative for the Greek, a transliteration (Ananke) is perhaps preferable although less readable.

Necessitas, forseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos. Qv. tractate XII:5 where a similar expression occurs:

> συνέχει δὲ τοῦτον ὁ αἰών, εἴτε δι' ἀνάγκην εἴτε πρόνοιαν εἴτε φύσιν καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο οἴεται ἢ οἰήσεταί τις
>
> Aion maintains this through necessitas or through foreseeing or through physis, or through whatever other assumption we assume

foreseeing. πρόνοια. Foreseeing includes such arts as prophecy.

apprehended. Cf. Poemandres 3: νοῆσαι τὴν τού των φύσιν, to apprehend the physis of beings; that is to discern, discover, their being, their relation to other beings, and to Being.

corpus, corpora. I have here used a Latin term for σῶμα (corpus, plural corpora) in order to try to give some intimation of the meaning of the text (the Greek is somewhat obscure), and to avoid using the rather prosaic terms 'body' and 'bodies', and to thus suggest technical terms which expound and befit a metaphysical weltanschauung, implying as they do here 'materia' in general; the stuff, the material, that exists in the Universe, and how such corpora including mortals relate to theos.

15.

arithmos. I have detailed the reasons for transliterating ἀριθμὸς in my commentary on tractate IV:10. In essence, the translation 'number' does not express the metaphysical meaning here, qv. Aristotle *Metaphysics*, Book XIII, 1080b.20 and 1083b.10 et seq.

In addition, Proclus (in his Στοιχείωσις θεολογική, propositions 113f) wrote of ἀριθμὸς and ἑνάδες (henads) as essential parts of a cosmogony involving the gods, with Proclus equating ἑνάδες with those gods (op.cit., propositions 114ff),

> εἰ γὰρ τῶν ἑνάδων διττὸς ὁ ἀριθμός, ὡς δέδεικται πρότερον, καὶ αἱ μὲν αὐτοτελεῖς εἰσιν αἱ δὲ ἐλλάμψεις ἀπ᾽ ἐκείνων, τῶι δὲ ἑνὶ καὶ τἀγαθῶι συγγενὴς καὶ ὁμοφυὴς ὁ θεῖος ἀριθμός, ἑνάδες εἰσὶν αὐτοτελεῖς οἱ θεοί. (114)

There is also an interesting passage in a fragment of the commentary on Aristotle by Andronicus of Rhodes where psyche is said to have been described as ἀριθμὸς:

> ἀριθμὸν γὰρ ἐκάλουν φησὶ ‘τὴν ψυχήν ὅτι μηδὲν ζῶον ἐξ ἁπλοῦ σώματος ἀλλὰ κατά τινας λόγους καὶ ἀριθμοὺς κραθέντων τῶν πρώτων στοιχείων. (Themistii in libros Aristotelis De anima paraphrasis, XXXII, 23)

Regarding ἀριθμὸς in tractate IV:10, the relevant part is:

> μονὰς οὖσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἑτέρου ἀριθμοῦ.
>
> The Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos without itself being enfolded by any, begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any.

henads. ἑνάδες. A transliteration in common use since the concept of the ἑνάς - the Unity, often equated with μονὰς - is metaphysical and has various interpretations in Plato, Iamblichus, Proclus, and others.

cosmic order. κόσμος. Cf. Poemandres 7.

a mighty theos. In respect of the term μέγας θεὸς it is interesting to note that frescoes in a Minoan settlement in Akrotiri on the island of Santorini depict η μεγάλη θεά (the mighty goddess) among women holding bunches of flowers and a woman holding a net which, given the presence of birds in the fresco, is possibly for catching birds as gifts for the goddess.

The term μέγας θεὸς also occurs in Acts 19:17 in reference to the Temple of Artemis - μεγάλης θεᾶς Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερὸν - with Artemis mentioned again in v.28, Μεγάλη ἡ Ἄρτεμις Ἐφεσίων (Powerful is Artemis of the Ephesians).

cyclic return. Qv. tractate XI:2, ἀποκατάστασις καὶ ἀνταποκατάστασις, cyclic return and renewal.

while it exists. Referring to the 'cosmic order' and thus to Kosmos, eikon of a more mighty divinity.

16.

the denotata of being-becoming. Qv. the comment in section 11 regarding denotata and denotatum.

17.

nurturer. τιθήνη. Cf. tractate XI:7, τροφὸν καὶ τιθήνην, nourisher and nurturer.

fourth parsement. τέταρτον μέρος. By a parsement - partiment, from the Latin partimentum - is meant the fundamental (the basic, elemental, primal) component or principle of 'things' as understood or as posited in Hellenic times. Here Earth is described as the fourth part, the other three being Air, Water, and Fire. Cf. Poemandres 8.

18.

alertness. αἴσθησις. Alertness as in being perceptively aware of one's surroundings. Cf. Poemandres 5.

pnuema. πνεῦμα. A transliteration for reasons explained in my commentary on the text of Poemandres 5. In sum, the usual translation of 'spirit' is too restrictive and has too many modern and Christian associations. The various senses of πνεῦμα in classical times are summarized in DeWitt Burton, *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918).

19.

Therefore all living beings [...] perceiveration. Reading διὰ τὸν νοῦν and not δι' αὐτόν.

20.

capability. δύναμις. Not 'strength' or 'power' per se, but rather having the capacity, the capability, to do - to change, to craft, to bring-into-being - anything. Cf. δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών in tractate XI: 3,

> πηγὴ μὲν οὖν πάντων ὁ θεός, οὐσία δὲ ὁ αἰών, ὕλη δὲ ὁ κόσμος, δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών, ἔργον δὲ τοῦ αἰῶνος ὁ κόσμος, γενόμενος οὔποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος· διὸ οὐδὲ φθαρήσεταί ποτε αἰὼν γὰρ ἄφθαρτος οὐδὲ ἀπολεῖταί τι τῶν ἐν τῶι κόσμωι, τοῦ κόσμου ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐμπεριεχομένου.
>
> The foundation of all being is theos; of their quidditas, Aion; of their substance, Kosmos. The craft of theos: Aion; the work of Aion: Kosmos, which is not just a coming-into-being but always is, from Aion. Thus it cannot be destroyed since Aion is not destroyable nor will Kosmos cease to be since Aion surrounds it.

21.

influencive. κινέω. That is, to affect things, to set things in motion, to cause change.

actuosities. ἐνέργειαι. The sense of the Greek here is of (often vigorous) activity or occurrences either natural or which result from the actions of divinities or daimons. To try and convey something of this, I have chosen the English term 'actuosities' rather than 'energies' which - given what the English term 'energy' now often imputes - does not in my view express the metaphysical meaning here. The English word actuosity derives from the classical Latin actuosus, with the adjective actuose occurring in a 1677 book by Theophilus Gale: " Ἐνεργεῖν, as applied to God, notes his actuose, efficacious, and predeterminate concurse in and with althings." (The Court of The Gentiles. Part III, London, 1677).

A more recent usage was by Ferrarin in chapter 8 - Aristotle's De anima and Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit - of his book *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) where he wrote: "Hegel appropriates and transforms the meaning of *energeia* to define spirit. Spirit is actuosity..."

aspects. Reading μέρη ἐστὶ not μέλη ἐστὶ.

blood. Reading καὶ αἷμα with the MSS. In the metaphysical context of the tractate, blood as an 'aspect of theos' makes sense.

22.

All That Exists. τὸ πᾶν. Literally, 'the all', but metaphysically implying 'all that exists', that is, the Universe.

23.

disposition. ποιότης. As in section 7, not signifying here 'quality' but rather 'disposition,' qv. ποιός, what kind, nature, type, character.

What is being enumerated - οὔτε μέγεθος οὔτε τόπος οὔτε ποιότης οὔτε σχῆμα οὔτε χρόνος - are not abstractions (such as 'time') but rather mortal-type attributes and appellations that are irrelevant in respect of theos.

respected and followed. Given the metaphysical - not religious - tone and content of the tractate, I incline toward the view that προσκύνει καὶ θρήσκευε here does not imply a Christian-type reverence or worship or even being religious, but rather respect and following, as various Hellenic weltanschauungen or philosophies were respected and followed.

Ερμού του τρισμεγίστου προς τον υιόν Τάτ
εν όρει λόγος απόκρυφος περί παλιγγενεσίας και σιγής επαγγελίας

On A Mountain:
Hermes Trismegistus To His Son Thoth,
An Esoteric Discourse Concerning Palingenesis
And The Requirement of Silence

Tractate XIII

°°°

Translation

[1] When, father, you in the Exoterica conversed about divinity your language was enigmatic and obscure. There was, from you, no disclosure; instead, you said no one can be rescued before the Palingenesis. Now, following our discussion as we were passing over the mountain I became your supplicant, inquiring into learning the discourse on Palingenesis since that, out of all of them, is the only one unknown to me, with you saying it would be imparted to me when I became separated from the world.

Thus I prepared myself, distancing my ethos from the treachery in the world. Therefore - by explaining it either aloud or in secret - rectify my insufficiencies since you said you would impart Palingenesis to me.

Trismegistus, I am unknowing of what source a mortal is begotten and from what sown.

[2] My son, noetic sapientia is in silence, with the sowing the genuinely noble.

Father, that is completely impenetrable. So, of whom dispersed?

Of, my son, the desire of theos.

Father, of what kind then the begotten? For I do not share in such a quidditas and such a perceiveration.

Those begotten of theos are other than theos: young but entirely whole, mixion of all abilities.

Father, you speak enigmatically to me, not in the language of a teacher to a pupil.

My son, this emanation is not taught; rather, it is presenced by and when the theos desires.

[3] Father, while you speak of what is impractical and forced, I on my part seek what is straightforward. Was I produced as a foreign son of the paternal emanation? Do not repine me, father: I am a rightful son. Relate - plainly - the way of palingenesis.

My son, what is there to say? All that can be told is this: I saw an unshaped vista, brought-into-being through the generosity of theos, of me setting forth to a deathless body, and now I am not that before because engendered by perceiveration.

This matter is not taught: not through that shaped part through which is seeing. Thus and for me there is no concern for the initial mixturous form. It is not as if I am biochrome and have tactility and definity: I am a stranger to them. You, my son, now observe me with your eyes and directly see my physicality and perceptible form. And yet, my son, I am now not understandable with those eyes.

[4] Father, you have stung the heart, causing no minor distraction, for I cannot now perceive myself.

Would that you, my son, would - while not asleep - go beyond yourself as those who sleepfully dream.

Inform me also of this: who is the essentiator of the Palingenesis?

Through the desire of theos: The Mortal One, child of theos.

[5] Father, what you have now presented has silenced me, with a forsaking of what was previously in my heart <...> since I perceive that your stature and your likeness are still the same.

In that you have been deceived, for the form of the deathful alters every day: changed by the seasons, it grows then withers and so deceives.

[6] What then - Trismegistus - is the actuality?

My son: the imperturbable, the indistinguishable, the un-complexioned, the figureless, the steadfast, the unadorned, the revealed, the self-perceiving, the unwaveringly noble, the unmaterial.

Father, I am completely confused. Just when I considered you were engendering learning in me, the perceptibility of my apprehension was obstructed.

Thus it is, my son. It ascends, as Fire does, and descends, as Earth does, and

flows, as Water does, and is neumæos as is Air. But how can you apprehend through perception what is insubstantial, what is not flowing, what is unmixturous, what is undissolved; that which is only apprehensible through influence and actuosity, requiring someone able to apprehend that bringing-into-being within theos?

[7] Father, am I then deficient?

Not so, my son. Go within: and an arriving. Intend: and an engendering. Let physical perceptibility rest, and divinity will be brought-into-being. Refine yourself, away from the brutish Alastoras of Materies.

Alastoras are within me, then, father?

Not just a few, my son, but many and terrifying.

I do not apprehend them, father.

My son, one Vengeress is Unknowing; the second, Grief. The third, Unrestraint; the fourth, Lascivity. The fifth, Unfairness; the sixth, Coveter. The seventh, Deceit; the eighth, Envy. The ninth, Treachery; the tenth, Wroth. The eleventh, Temerity; the twelfth, Putridity.

In number, these are twelve but below them are numerous others who, my son, compel the inner mortal - bodily incarcerated - to suffer because of perceptibility. But they absent themselves - although not all at once - from those to whom theos is generous, which is what the Way and Logos of Palingenesis consists of.

[8] Henceforward, speak quietly, my son, and keep this secret. For thus may the generosity of theos toward us continue.

Henceforward, my son, be pleased, having refinement through the cræfts of theos to thus comprehend the Logos.

My son, to us: arrivance of Knowledge of Theos. On arrival: Unknowing is banished. My son, to us: arrivance of Knowledge of Delightfulness: on arriving, Grief runs away to those who have the room.

[9] The influence invoked following Delightfulness is Self-Restraint: a most pleasant influence. Let us, my son, readily welcome her: arriving, she immediately pushes Unrestraint aside.

The fourth invoked is Perseverance who is influxious against Lascivity. Which Grade, my son, is the foundation of Ancestral Custom: observe how without any deliberation Unfairness was cast out. My son, we are vindicated since Unfairness has departed.

The sixth influence invoked for us - against Coveter - is community. With that departed, the next invokation: Actualis, and thus - with Actualis presenced - does Deceit run away. Observe, my son, how with Actualis presenced and Envy absent, the noble has been returned. For, following Actualis, there is the noble, together with Life and Phaos.

No more does the retribution of Skotos supervene, for, vanquished, they whirlingly rush away.

[10] Thus, my son, you know the Way of Palingenesis. By the Dekad brought-into-being, geniture of apprehension was produced, banishing those twelve; and by this geniture we are of theos.

Thus whomsoever because of that generosity obtains divine geniture, having gone beyond physical perceptibility, discovers that they consist of such, and are pleased.

[11] With a quietude, father, engendered by theos, the seeing is not of the sight from the eyes but that through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air. I am in living beings, in plants; in the womb, before the womb, after the womb. Everywhere.

But speak to me about how the retributions of Skotos - which are twelve in number - are pushed aside by ten influences. What is that Way, Trismegistus?

[12] My son, this body which we have passed beyond is constituted from the circular Zodiac which is composed of beings, twelve in number and of the same physis, yet polymorphous in appearance so as to lead mortals astray. The difference between them, my son, becomes one when they act <...> Temerity united with Wroth, and indistinguishable.

It is probably correct to say that all of them withdraw when pushed away by those ten influences: that is, by the Dekad. For, my son, the Dekad is an effector of psyche, with Life and Phaos a unity there where the arithmos of the Henad is brought forth from the pneuma. Thus it is reasonable that the Henad contains the Dekad and the Dekad the Henad.

[13] Father, I observe All That Exists, and myself, in the perceiveration.

My son, this is the Palingenesis: to no more present the body in three separations, through this disclosure regarding Palingenesis, which I have written about for you alone so as not to be rouners of all these things to the many but instead to whomsoever theos himself desires.

[14] Inform me, father, if this body - constituted of such cræfts - is liable to dissipation.

Speak quietly and do not talk of deficiencies or you shall be in error with the eye of your perceiveration disrespectful. The perceptible body of physis is far away from the quidditas of geniture, for one is dissipative, the other is not-dissipative; one is deathful, the other deathless.

Do you not know that you are engendered of theos, as a child of The One, as am I?

[15] Father, my inclination is for the laudation of the song you said you heard from those influences when you reached the Ogdoad.

Just as, my son, Poemandres divined about the Ogdoad. It is noble of you to hasten to leave that dwelling for you are now refined. Poemandres, the perceiveration of authority, did not impart to me anything other than what is written, understanding that I would apprehended the entirety; hearing what I was inclined to, observing the entirety, and entrusting me to presence the beautiful. Thus do all those influences within me chant.

Father, I desire to hear them so that I might apprehend.

[16] Be quiet my son: now hear that most fitting laudation, the song of Palingenesis which I had chosen not to openly divulge except to you at your completion and which is not taught but concealed through silence.

Thus, my son, on your feet in a place open to the air look respectfully to the Southwind as Helios descends, as at the ascending and toward the Eastwind.

Be quiet my son.

Logos Δ. The Esoteric Song

[17] Let every Physis of Kosmos favourably listen to this song.
Gaia: be open, so that every defence against the Abyss is opened for me;
Trees: do not incurvate;
For I now will sing for the Master Artisan,
For All That Exists, and for The One.

Open: you Celestial Ones; and you, The Winds, be calm.
Let the deathless clan of theos accept this, my logos.
For I shall sing of the maker of everything;
Of who established the Earth,
Of who affixed the Heavens,

Of who decreed that Oceanus should bring forth sweet water
To where was inhabited and where was uninhabited
To so sustain all mortals;
Of who decreed that Fire should bring light
To divinities and mortals for their every use.

Let us all join in fond celebration of who is far beyond the Heavens:
That artisan of every Physis.

May the one who is the eye of perceiveration accept this fond celebration
From my Arts.

[18] Let those Arts within me sing for The One and for All That Exists
As I desire all those Arts within me to blend, together.

Numinous knowledge, from you a numinal understanding:
Through you, a song of apprehended phaos,
Delighted with delightful perceiverance.
Join me, all you Arts, in song.

You, mastery, sing; and you, respectful of custom,
Through me sing of such respect.
Sing, my companions, for All That Exists:
Honesty, through me, sing of being honest,
The noble, sing of nobility.

Phaos and Life: fond celebration spreads from us to you.

My gratitude, father: actuosity of those my Arts.
My gratitude, theos: Artisan of my actuosities;
Through me, the Logos is sung for you.
Through me, may Kosmos accept
Such respectful wordful offerings as this.

[19] Such is what the Arts within me loudly call out. They sing of All That Exists; they accomplish your desire. From you: deliberations; then to you, from All That Exists.

Accept from Kosmos - the Kosmos within us - respectful wordful offerings. Life, recure! Phaos, reveal! Theos, spiritus! For - Breath-Giver, Artisan - it is your Logos that Perceiveration guides.

[20] You are theos. Your mortal loudly calls out: through Fire, through Air, through Earth, through Water, through Pneuma, through your created beings.

To me, from your Aion, a laudation. And, through your deliberations, I discovered the repose that I seek. Because of your desire, I perceived.

[21] Father, I also have assigned the laudation you spoke of to my Kosmos.

My son, speak of "in the apprehended."

In the apprehended I am able to do, father. For me, through your song and your laudation, a more numinal perceiveration. And yet, there is a desire for me to convey from my own heart a laudation to theos.

My son, do not be incautious.

Father, what I behold in the perceiverance, I say. It is to theos, to you - essentiator of engenderment - that I, Thoth, convey wordful offerings. Theos, you the Father; you the Kyrios, you the Perceiveration, accept the respectful wordful offerings you desire. For, by your deliberations, all is accomplished.

My son, you convey an agreeable offering to theos, father of all. But you should add "through the Logos."

[22] My thanks to you, father, for your advice regarding the invokation.

My son, I am glad that the actuality has borne good fruit, the unrottable produce. Having learned of this from me, profess silence my son about this wonder, revealing to no one the tradition of the Palingenesis, for otherwise we will be regarded as rouners. Each of us has had a sufficiency of interest: I in speaking, you in listening. Through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father

°°°

Commentary

Title.

Ερμού του τρισμεγίστου προς τον υιόν Τάτ εν όρει λόγος απόκρυφος περί παλιγγενεσίας και σιγής επαγγελίας. On A Mountain: Hermes Trismegistus To His Son Thoth, An Esoteric Discourse Concerning Palingenesis And The Requirement of Silence.

Thoth. As in other tractates I translate Τάτ by Thoth, avoiding the conventional *Tat* which, in English, has a colloquial meaning inappropriate here. As to which 'Thoth' is meant, the consensus is that in this and some other tractates it refers to the son (possibly biologically or more probably metaphorically) of Hermes

Trismegistus who himself was named by the Greeks as Thoth, with the Τάτ of some other tractates being a scribal corruption of the name Thoth.

Esoteric Discourse. λόγος απόκρυφος. While 'esoteric' is an apt translation in regard to απόκρυφος, 'discourse' is not entirely satisfactory in respect of λόγος since it could be here interpreted to mean 'disclosure' or 'explanation'. However, given what follows in section 1 - πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν...παραδιδόναι μοι - 'discourse' seems appropriate.

Palingenesis. Rather than ascribe a particular meaning to παλιγγενεσία - such as 'rebirth' or 'regeneration' - I have chosen the English word palingenesis (from the Latin palingenesia) with that term explained by what follows in this particular discourse, qv. vv. 12 and 13.

Requirement. The sense of ἐπαγγελία here, given what is discussed in this tractate, is 'requirement' rather than the strident 'command' or what is implied by the rather vague word 'promise'.

1.

Father. The Greek ὦ πάτερ - literally 'my father' - is a polite form of address, akin to the English 'sir'. Similarly, ὦ τέκνον - 'my son' - is a polite reply. Given the esoteric nature of the text, a possible interpretation here of ὦ πάτερ would be 'Master', and of ὦ τέκνον 'my pupil'.

in the Exoterica. Ἐν τοῖς γενικοῖς. Since the term γενικῶν λόγων occurs in tractate X it is reasonable to assume that γενικός here refers to the same thing although the meaning of the term is moot given that no details are provided in this tractate nor in tractate X, nor in Stobaeus (Excerpts, III, 1 and VI, 1) where the terms also occurs. While most translators have assumed that it refers to 'generic' things or 'generalities' and thus (by adding λόγοι) have opted for an expression such as 'General Discourses', and given that a transliteration - such as genikois or genikoi - is awkward, I have in respect of the γενικοὶ opted for exoterica (from the Latin via the Greek τὰ ἐξωτερικά) with the meaning of "exoteric treatises designed for or suitable to the generality of disciples or students," with the plausible suggestion thus being that there are exoteric Hermetic treatises and esoteric Hermetic treatises, with Reitzenstein describing these other treatises as διεξοδικοί λόγοι (R.A. Reitzenstein. *Poimandres*. Teubner, Leipzig. 1904. p.118) a distinction he also mentioned in his later work *Die Hellenistischen Mysterien Religionen*.

passing over the mountain. I follow the MSS and read μεταβάσεως rather than the emendation καταβάσεως, taking the sense of μεταβάσεως here as "passing over" - walking on and over - the mountain. There seems no need for the emendation - which implies a descent from the mountain - with its possible suggestion of something more symbolic, more religious or mystical, having

occurred, as for example might be implied in the Gospel of John with the juxtaposition of κατέβη and ἀνέβη in chapter one vv.12-13, with Thomas Aquinas writing:

> "Sed non vacat a mysterio, quod in Capharnaum descendit, et postmodum Ierosolymam ascendit. Nisi enim descendisset primum, non competisset ei ascendere: quia, ut dicitur Eph. IV, 10, qui descendit, ipse est et qui ascendit." *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, Caput II, Lectio 1
>
> That he descended to Capernaum and then ascended to Jerusalem is not without its mystery since if he did not first descend he would not have been able to then ascend, for as has been related (Eph. IV, 10) "The one who descended is the same as the one who ascended."

the discourse on palingenesis. The Greek word translated here as 'discourse' is λόγος, as in the title.

imparted to me. παραδίδωμι carries the sense here of 'handing down' - of transmitting, disclosing - some ancestral teaching or wisdom; a disclosing from master to pupil.

separated from the world. In respect of ἀπαλλοτριόω what is implied is not 'alienated' from (which has too many modern connotations) the world (κόσμος), but rather 'separate' - distanced - from the world, from worldly things, as a mystic is often 'otherworldly' and may seem to be - to others, and to themselves - a stranger in the world.

distancing my ethos. Reading ἀπηλλοτρίωσα (with Parthey, et al) not the emendation of Nock (ἀπηνδρείωσα) with φρόνημα here suggestive of one's character and especially of one's "way of thinking", one's weltanschauung: that is, the 'spirit' or ethos which guides one's way of life.

treachery. ἀπάτης. Personified in Hesiod's Theogony as a child of Night (Νὺξ) along with "darksome Kir and Death" - Κῆρα μέλαιναν καὶ Θάνατον - and Nemesis, Νέμεσις.

rectify my insufficiencies. τὰ ὑστερήματα ἀναπλήρωσον. An alternative, literal, translation would be "supply what is needed."

since you said you would impart Palingenesis to me. Given the somewhat unusual phrasing here - οἷς ἔφης μοι παλιγγενεσίας παραδοῦναι, which led Nock to add γένεσιν after παλιγγενεσίας - it seems that παλιγγενεσίας is the title given to a particular doctrine or esoteric theory rather than just a term such as 'rebirth'. Hence my capitalization.

what source ... what sown. The metaphysical context - and the reply - suggests that both μήτρας and σπορᾶς are meant metaphorically rather than literally

(womb, seed).

mortal. As in other tractates I translate ἄνθρωπος as 'mortal' rather than as 'man'. Which here - as in other tractates - suits both the Hellenic context, of mortals contrasted with the immortal theos and the immortal theoi, and the metaphysical context of immortality being possibly attainable by select mortals.

2.

noetic sapientia. For a variety of reasons, I have used the term *noetic sapientia* to denote σοφία νοερὰ.

i) The metaphysical terms νοῦς νοερός, νοῦς οὐσιώδης, and νοῦς ζωτικός occur in Proclus, qv. *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentari*, Volume 5, Book 4, 245-247; *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, II 733 and IV 887. Interestingly, Proclus associates νοερός with the three 'septenary planets' Mercury, Venus, and the Sun.

Here, σοφία νοερὰ may well suggest a particular hermetic principle which requires contextual interpretation.

ii) As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 29 - where I used the Latin *sapientia* in respect of σοφία - in some contexts the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context given what the English term 'wisdom' now, in common usage and otherwise, often denotes. As in the Poemandres tractate *sapientia* (for σοφία) requires contextual - a philosophical - interpretation, as Sophia (for σοφία) does in tractate XI where it is there suggestive, as with Aion, Kronos, and Kosmos, of a personified metaphysical principle.

iii) In respect of νοερός, the English word 'intellectual' has too many irrelevant modern connotations, with phrases such as 'intellectual wisdom' and 'the wisdom that understands' - for σοφία νοερὰ - unhelpful regarding suggesting a relevant philosophical meaning. Hence the use of the term 'noetic' which suggests a particular type of apprehension - a perceiveration - whereby certain knowledge and a particular understanding can be ascertained.

Thus, *noetic sapientia* implies that the knowledge and understanding that is noetically acquired transcends - or at least is different from - that acquired both (a) through observation of and deductions concerning phenomena and (b) through the use of denotatum whereby beings are given 'names' and assigned to abstractive categories with such naming and such categories assumed to provide knowledge and understanding of the physis of those beings. [In respect of physis, qv. the comment on φύσεως μιᾶς in section 12.]

In addition, given what follows - ἐν σιγῇ, 'in silence' - such knowledge and understanding does not require nor depend upon words whether they be spoken

or written or thought. Hence, the 'source' of mortals is in, can be known and understood through, the silence of noetic sapientia.

genuine. In respect of ἀληθινός as 'genuine', cf. Poemandres 30, ἀληθινὴ ὅρασις.

noble. Regarding ἀγαθός as 'noble/nobility/honour', qv. my commentary on Poemandres 22 and my essays *Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum* and *Cicero On Summum Bonum*.

of whom dispersed. To express the meaning of the Greek, to avoid gender bias and because of the following παῖς, I have here used the plural rather than the singular, those avoiding expressions such as "I do not share/he does not share" and "he that is begotten of theos." This also has the advantage of avoiding a misapprehension such as "the begotten one will be different, a god, a son of god."

the desire of theos. In respect of θέλημα here, qv. v.18, συνάσατε τῷ θελήματί μου πᾶσαι αἱ ἐν ἐμοὶ δυνάμεις.

quidditas. οὐσία. As at tractates XI:2 and VI:1, quidditas is a more appropriate translation of οὐσία rather than either 'essence' or 'substance'. Quidditas is post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity, and here as in those tractates should be understood as a philosophical term requiring contextual interpretation. One possible interpretation of quidditas here as at VI:1 is 'the being of that being/entity', with such quidditas often presenced in - and perceived via or as - φύσις (physis).

such a perceiveration. I have followed the MSS and translated καὶ τῆς νοητῆς, omitted by Nock et al. In respect of νοητῆς, cf. Plutarch on the views of Krantor of Soli regarding psyche: μιγνύντι τὴν ψυχὴν ἔκ τε τῆς νοητῆς καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ δοξαστῆς φύσεως (De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo, 1).

In respect of νοῦς as perceiveration/perceiverance, qv. my commentary on the Poemandres tractate.

entirely whole. τὸ πᾶν ἐν παντί. A literal translation - "the all in all" - does not in its blandness (and the fact that "all in all" is a colloquialism) convey the meaning of the Greek, which considering what follows is suggestive of "entirely whole."

mixion of all abilities. ἐκ πασῶν δυνάμεων συνεστώς. Mixion - a variant spelling of mixtion, meaning melded, compounded, combined, composed of - is most suitable for συνεστώς given the metaphysical matters discussed.

a teacher to a pupil. ὦ τέκνον and ὦ πάτερ not here literally referring to how a father should converse with his son but rather to a teacher instructing a pupil,

with the pupil expecting the teacher to explain matters clearly rather than by means of riddles.

emanation. I incline toward the view that γένος (which is literally, 'kind', species, race, folk, breed) is used here as a technical term which - given what follows, ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναμιμνήσκεται, and the fact that it is not feasible for one mortal to impart knowledge about it to another mortal - here implies a particular 'emanation' of theos; a knowing of which one has to, as Hermes goes on to describe, experience for it to be properly understood. Such 'emanations of theos' are described in the Poemandres tractate where they are symbolized by a septenary system and the two "immortal" (acausal) realms which await for mortals beyond those seven spheres, with knowledge of these emanations being acquired by the ἄνοδος (anados, the upward journey) from the deathful realms to the realms of the deathless.

The term emanation also has the advantage of connotating the literal meaning of γένος since an 'emanation' is derived from a particular kind, breed, or lineage.

presenced. The term 'presenced' is from the noun 'presencing' (derived from the Latin praesentia) and means "the action or process of making some-thing manifest and/or present and/or established."

ἀναμιμνήσκω is a very interesting word to use and one which has a variety of meanings depending on context, and thus does not always impute something to do with either 'mind' or with 'memory' as those English terms are now often understood with their implications of those 'things' having some sort of an existence 'somewhere' - in the case of 'memory' as a faculty of the 'mind' - and/or as quantifiable 'things'.

In the world of ancient heroes and warriors, as evoked by Homer, it is simply a 'mentioning' of something:

> ὦ φίλ᾽, ἐπεὶ δὴ ταῦτά μ᾽ ἀνέμνησας καὶ ἔειπες,
> φασὶ μνηστῆρας σῆς μητέρος εἵνεκα πολλοὺς
> ἐν μεγάροις ἀέκητι σέθεν κακὰ μηχανάασθαι
>
> My friend - since you have, in speaking to me, mentioned this,
> There are indeed rumours of many suitors for your mother being in your home
> Against your will who are plotting to do you harm.
>
> (Homer, The Odyssey, Book III, 321-323)

In Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles it implies a 'seeing again' of things past:

> ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ σαφῶς
> ἀγνῶτ᾽ ἀναμνήσω νιν. εὖ γὰρ οἶδ᾽ ὅτι
> κάτοιδεν, ἧμος τῷ Κιθαιρῶνος τόπῳ,

ὁ μὲν διπλοῖσι ποιμνίοις, ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἑνί,
ἐπλησίαζον τῷδε τἀνδρὶ τρεῖς ὅλους
ἐξ ἦρος εἰς ἀρκτοῦρον ἑκμήνους χρόνους

But I shall bring light
Upon those things which are now unknown. For well do I know
That he will see again that region of Cithaeron when he
With a double flock and I with one
Were neighbours and comrades for three entire six month
Durations from Spring to Arcturus.

(1131-1137)

In this tractate, the implication of ἀναμιμνήσκω is of theos - literally, given the definite article, τοῦ θεοῦ, *the* theos - presencing in the mortal (and thus gifting them with) the required understanding/knowledge of the emanation, just as theos has gifted mortals with sentience, cf. θεοῦ δωρεᾶς in IV:5, ἐλλόγιμος in tractate XI:7 and Asclepius 16, "Prouisum cautumque est, quantum rationabiliter potuisset a summo deo, tunc cum sensu, disciplina, intellegentia mentes hominum est munerare dignatus. Hisce enim rebus, quibus ceteris antestamus animalibus."

3.

unshaped. ἄπλαστον. A privation of πλάσσω, hence 'without invention, pretence, form; not manufactured, unadorned, unfashioned, without shape.' Cf. the irony of Lucian in *De Morte Peregrini* 10, πηλὸς γὰρ ἔτι ἄπλαστος ἦν καὶ οὐδέπω ἐντελὲς ἄγαλμα ἡμῖν δεδημιούργητο, for he was then formless clay with that glorious depiction not yet complete.

What is unshaped (form-less) is the vista - the view - seen, with there being no need, in my view, to impute that Hermes is here speaking of having had a 'vision', mystical, prophetic, or otherwise, given that a 'vision' is not by its nature of what is 'form-less' but of some-thing or some-things perceived and which therefore, being seen, have form or forms, qv. the mention of οὐδὲ τῷ πλαστῷ τούτῳ στοιχείῳ and of εἶδος which follow.

through the generosity of theos. ἐξ ἐλέου θεοῦ. Literally, "from the generosity of theos." Considering the metaphysical context, I incline toward the view that ἐλεός here is neither mercy - qv. Oedipus Tyrannus 672, ἐποικτίρω στόμα ἐλεινόν οὗτος δ᾽ ἔνθ᾽ ἂν ᾖ στυγήσεται - nor 'pity' (cf. Oedipus Tyrannus 180, νηλέα δὲ γένεθλα πρὸς πέδῳ θαναταφόρα κεῖται ἀνοίκτως) but rather 'generosity' in the sense of Matthew 12:7, τί ἐστιν Ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν, "I seek generosity and not sacrifice" with such 'generosity' (of deed and spirit) not exactly the same as what the word 'compassion' now implies, given the post-Hellenic and especially the contemporary connotations of the word 'compassion'.

setting forth ... engendered by perceiveration. καὶ ἐμαυτὸν ἐξελήλυθα εἰς ἀθάνατον σῶμα, καί εἰμι νῦν οὐχ ὁ πρίν, ἀλλ΄ ἐγεννήθην ἐν νῷ. This passage is usually interpreted in a way which suggests that Hermes is describing some kind of ancient 'astral travel' where he goes "out of himself" and thence "into" a deathless body, ἀθάνατον σῶμα (in respect of θάνατος and ἀθάνατος as deathful and deathless, qv. my commentary on Poemandres 14 and on vv. 1 and 2 of tractate XI).

However, I take the passage more literally, especially given the phrase εἰμι νῦν οὐχ ὁ πρίν, "now I am not the/that before," and the mention of having been produced/engendered/grown by perceiveration. That is, Hermes has "seen" - intuitively perceived, had an insight into - what deathlessness means and implies and is not the person he was before, having acquired (or been given, by theos) the gift of understanding that perceiveration engenders, for as mentioned in tractate IV:4

> βάπτισον σεαυτὴν ἡ δυναμένη εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ πιστεύουσα ὅτι ἀνελεύσηι πρὸς τὸν καταπέμψαντα τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ γνωρίζουσα ἐπὶ τί γέγονας. ὅσοι μὲν οὖν συνῆκαν τοῦ κηρύγματος καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τέλειοι ἐγένοντο ἄνθρωποι, τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι
>
> If you have strength enough, immerse yourself in the chaldron
> Should you accept you can ascend -
> Having discovered how you came-into-being -
> To the one who dispatched down that chaldron.
> The many who understood that declaration and were immersive with perceiveration
> Gained a certain knowledge, becoming more complete mortals
> Through having received the perceiveration

shaped part. A direct contrast with the previous use of πλάσσω in respect of what was seen.

thus and for me there is no concern for the initial mixturous form. διὸ καὶ ἠμέληταί μοι τὸ πρῶτον σύνθετον εἶδος. What there is no concern for is the causal form (εἶδος) of the mortal body, mixturous and formful as it is (in respect of mixturous, qv. the note on *mixion* in v. 2) and given that such an initial form will, by palingenesis, be changed.

not as if. Reading οὐχ ὅτι with the MSS; literally, "not as though." Cf. John 6:46 οὐχ ὅτι τὸν πατέρα ἑώρακέν τις.

biochrome ... definity. I take κέχρῳσμαι καὶ ἀφὴν ἔχω καὶ μέτρον, ἀλλότριος δὲ τούτων εἰμί metaphorically, not literally, with (i) κέχρῳσμαι implying not colour per se but rather biochromy, the natural or the apparent (observed) colouration of living beings, and (ii) μέτρον suggestive not of "measure" but rather of 'definity' in reference to 'indefinity' (from the noun indefinitude) and thus implying, in this context, 'beyond being definable' by ordinary, causal, means

such as 'measure' and 'weight' and 'determinability' and 'definement'.

and directly see my physicality and perceptible form. While various emendations have been suggested for the readings of the MSS here, including δέ εἰμι between ὅ τι δέ and κατανοεῖς, the general meaning seems clear: to directly see or fix or to concentrate one's eyes, one's gaze on (ἀτενίζω) the outward form (εἶδος) which here is the body, the physical appearance, the physicality of the person.

But, as Hermes goes on to explain - οὐκ ὀφθαλμοῖς τούτοις θεωροῦμαι νῦν - what is so observed by the physical eyes does not provide an understanding - a perception, a seeing - of what he is now as a result of the "unshaped vista" that he, through the generosity of theos, saw of himself "setting forth to a deathless body." In respect of θεωρέω, cf. John 4:19, λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, Κύριε, θεωρῶ ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ, "the woman said to him: Sir, I deem you are a prophet."

4.

Father, you have stung the heart, plunging me into no minor distraction, for I cannot now perceive myself. Εἰς μανίαν με οὐκ ὀλίγην καὶ οἴστρησιν φρενῶν ἐνέσεισας, ὦ πάτερ· ἐμαυτὸν γὰρ νῦν οὐχ ὁρῶ.

My translation is quite different from previous ones - such as Copenhaver's "you have driven me quite mad, father, and you have deranged my heart. Now I do not see myself" - for the following reasons.

i) Does μανία, in the context of this particular tractate, equate to what the English terms 'mania' and 'madness' now denote, as for example - in the case of mania - in 'obsessive need or enthusiasm', 'mood disorder', and - in the case of madness - 'mental illness', psychosis, lack of restraint, uncontrollable fury, uncontrollable mental turmoil, or even in the colloquial sense of 'cool' or quirkily interesting?

It is my considered opinion that it does not, but rather denotes what is suggested by Acts 26:24-25 especially given the use there of μαίνομαι,

> Ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπολογουμένου ὁ Φῆστος μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ φησίν Μαίνῃ, Παῦλε· τὰ πολλά σε γράμματα εἰς μανίαν περιτρέπει. ὁ δὲ Παῦλος Οὐ μαίνομαι, φησίν, κράτιστε Φῆστε, ἀλλὰ ἀληθείας καὶ σωφροσύνης ῥήματα ἀποφθέγγομαι.
>
> Speaking up for himself, Festus, in a very loud voice, said: "Paul, you are distracted. Your extensive learning has brought you to distraction." But Paul replied: "Noble Festus, I am not beside myself for the words I have spoken are restrained and truthful."

ii) In respect of οἴστρησιν I am rather reminded of the usage of οἴστρημα in Oedipus Tyrannus, 1318,

> οἴμοι μάλ᾽ αὖθις: οἷον εἰσέδυ μ᾽ ἅμα κέντρων τε τῶνδ᾽ οἴστρημα καὶ μνήμη κακῶν
>
> as do the stings of those goads, and the recalling of those troubles, pierce me

where the transitive senses of *goad* include "to cause annoyance or discomfort; to spur someone on, or 'to sting' or to prod someone to provoke them into responding."

Thus, with φρήν taken as a metaphor for the heart, one has the contextually apposite *stung the heart,* rather than completely out of context phrases such as "mind frenzy" or "mad".

iii) ἐμαυτὸν γὰρ νῦν οὐχ ὁρῶ. Not a literal 'cannot see' but rather 'cannot comprehend who or what I - as a being - am," as a consequence of what Hermes has just said about his own being. Hence, *I cannot now perceive myself*.

go beyond. In respect of διεξελήλυθας, not here implying to "pass through", or "come out" (of yourself) but "go - or pass - beyond" (yourself) as those sleepfully dreaming often in their dreams travel far beyond where they are sleeping.

essentiator. The entity, person, or divinity, who essentiates; that is, who is the genesis of, who is the essence of, and who gives being to - who 'authors' and who fashions - the Palingenesis. Which 16th century English word expresses the meaning here of the Greek term γενεσιουργός. Cf. δημιουργός - 'artisan' - in Poemandres 24.

*The Mortal One, child of theo*s. Ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς, ἄνθρωπος εἷς, θελήματι θεοῦ. In respect of ἄνθρωπος εἷς, literally, *Essentialist Mortal*. That is, the primatial, or 'archetypal', human being. In respect of Ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς, cf. v. 2: τοῦ θελήματος τοῦ θεοῦ...ὸ γεννώμε νος θεοῦ θεὸς παῖς, with παῖς not restricted to 'son' but implying the child - and hence the children, the youthful - of *the* theos, with the conventional translation here of 'son of god' imposing a particular meaning on the text and thus inviting as it may unwarranted comparisons with aspects of Christian theology.

5.

silenced. In regard to ἀφασίαν, qv. Euripides, Helen, 548-9,

> ὡς δέμας δείξασα σὸν ἔκπληξιν ἡμῖν ἀφασίαν τε προστίθης
>
> I am mortified, silenced, by you imposing such a bodily appearance upon me

in my heart <...> since I perceive. It is possible that Reitzenstein's assumption - in *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*. Teubner, Leipzig, 1927 - of a lacuna here is correct, although it is perhaps more probable to interpret what Thoth has just said - that he perceives the stature and the features of Hermes are still the same - accounts for him "forsaking what was previously in his heart," because he now believes that Hermes was speaking metaphorically in regard to being a stranger to "tactility and definity." Which is why, after the reply from Hermes, Thoth goes on to ask τί οὖν ἀληθές ἐστιν (what, then, is the actuality) and then, after the reply from Hermes, says Μέμηνα ὄντως.

the seasons. As elsewhere, χρόνος is not some abstract 'time' but rather the duration or durations between certain observable events or changes, often measured by such things as the phases of the moon or by the appearance or disappearance of constellations or certain stars in the night sky. Here, it refers to the seasons of Nature and how, over the seasons, mortals - and crops - grow then wither.

6.

What then - Trismegistus - is the actuality? Τί οὖν ἀληθές ἐστιν¸ ὦ Τρισμέγιστε. In respect of ἀλήθεια I have - as in translations of other Hermetic tractates, such as Poemandres 31 and XI:1 - eschewed the conventional translation of 'truth' (with its implication of some abstract, impersonal, and disputable, meaning) in favour of a contextual interpretation, mindful as I am of John 18:38 - τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια, Quid est veritas? - which well expresses a Greco-Roman sentiment.

The English term is derived from the classical Latin *actualis* and, in this context, refers to what is real, what has actual being or is a demonstrable fact.

the un-complexioned...the unmaterial. There are two ways of construing what follows. As an impersonal list of philosophical attributes - such as formless, colourless - or metaphorically as personal qualities associated with or relevant to the quest for palingenesis, and while most translators have chosen the first option I incline toward the view that, given the personal context - of what Hermes has said, "directly see my physicality," and about how "the form of the deathful alters every day" - they signify personal qualities. These personal qualities, such as τὸ ἀσχημάτιστον and τὸ ἀσώματον are echoed in the *De Imaginibus Oratio* of Iohannes Damascenus (written c. 730 CE) when he enumerates the qualities of God.

Here, and for example,

i) *the un-complexioned*. τὸ ἀχρώματον, qv. ἄχροος, the opposite of εὔχροος, cf. Xenophon, Cyropaedia, Book VIII, 1.41 ὡς εὐχροώτεροι ὁρῷντο ἢ πεφύκασιν. An alternative to 'un-complexioned' would be 'hueless'.

ii) *the figureless*. τὸ ἀσχημάτιστον. That is, of no particular physique. Qv. Iohannes Damascenus, *De Imaginibus Oratio* I: 4. (Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 94). Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Book VIII, 3.59, sunt inornata et haec: quod male dispositum est, id ἀνοικονόμητον, quod male figuratum, id ἀσχημάτιστον quod male collocatum.

iii) *the unadorned*. τὸ γυμνόν. Not literally 'naked' or unclothed, but a metaphor for 'unadorned'.

iv) *the revealed*. τὸ φαῖνον. While the literal sense here is problematic - cf. Herodotus, II, 71.1, χαυλιόδοντας φαῖνον, and Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1229, τὰ δ᾽ αὐτίκ᾽ εἰς τὸ φῶς φανεῖ, "soon to be exposed to the light" - what seems to be suggested metaphorically is 'the visible', 'the (already) revealed', and thus someone who is conspicuously (luminously) open and honest and has nothing to hide that might, to their detriment, be exposed. Cf. τὸν ἐπιτάξαντα πῦρ φανῆναι in v. 17 and the quotation there from Plato, Timaeus, 39b.

v) *the self-perceiving*. τὸ αὐτῷ καταληπτόν. That is, the self-apprehended, the self-aware, person.

vi) *the unwaveringly noble*. τὸ ἀναλλοίωτον ἀγαθόν. Qv. τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀγαθόν, ὕμνει in v. 18.

vii) *the unmaterial*. τὸ ἀσώματον. The personal sense is well-expressed in a 14th century translation of 'De Proprietatibus Rerum' in which the qualities of an angel are explained: "inasmuch as he is farre from the bondage of earthly matter, insomuch he is the more perfect in contemplation of spirituall and unmateriall thinges." (Book I, ii. ii. 60). In respect of the term as applied to God, qv. Iohannes Damascenus, *De Imaginibus Oratio* I: 4. Cf. Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, V, 15, 1-4,

> Vetus atque perpetua quaestio inter nobilissimos philosophorum agitata est, corpusne sit vox an incorporeum. Hoc enim vocabulum quidam finxerunt proinde quod Graece dicitur ἀσώματον. Corpus autem est quod aut efficient est aut patiens; id Graece definitur τὸ ἤτοι ποιοῦν ἢ πάσχον. Quam definitionem significare volens, Lucretius poeta ita scripsit: Tangere enim aut tangi, nisi corpus, nulla potest res.

I am completely confused. Μέμηνα ὄντως. Just as in v. 4, the context does not support Thoth saying - even rhetorically - something such as "I have gone mad" or "I am really deranged" considering what the English words "mad" and "deranged" now impute. The sense here - given what follows, ἐνεφράχθησαν αἱ αἰσθήσεις τούτου μου τοῦ νοήματος - is rather of being completely confused, befuddled, and thus lost because of what Hermes has just said. Cf. John 10:20, Δαιμόνιον ἔχει καὶ μαίνεται τί αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε - "why listen to him? He bears a

daemon and is not himself" - with its suggestion that not only is the person completely confused but also that it is not him who is speaking (or, more probably, not he who is ranting) but the daemon he carries around and thus is "possessed" by.

the perceptibility of my apprehension was obstructed. ἐνεφράχθησαν αἱ αἰσθήσεις τούτου μου τοῦ νοήματος. Although the Greek is somewhat obscure, the general sense is that his perception - his understanding - of what he thought Hermes was explaining is now gone, having been obstructed, lost, because of his confusion.

and flows, as Water does, and is neumæos as is Air. The meaning here of ὑγρός and σύμπνοος are uncertain, with the context, the mention of elemental Fire, Earth, Water, and Air, perhaps indicative of them being technical (esoteric) hermetic terms rather than having their normal (exoteric) meaning of 'moist/wet' and 'breathing together' respectively.

i) In regard to ὑγρός, qv. Poemandres 4, where the context - ἀφάτως τεταραγμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδι δοῦσαν - implies flowing, Cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds,* 314 - ταῦτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐποίουν ὑγρᾶν Νεφελᾶν στρεπταιγλᾶν δάιον ὁρμάν - where clouds are described as flowing and in their flowing-moving obscure the brightness (of the day).

ii) In regard to σύμπνοος, qv. Περὶ Εἱμαρμένης attributed to Plutarch - τὸ φύσει διοικεῖσθαι τόνδε τὸν κόσμον σύμπνουν καὶ συμπαθῆ αὐτὸν αὐτῷ ὄντα (574e) - literally meaning that the Kosmos is συμπαθῆ with itself and mutually breathing (σύμπνους), with the implication that it is a wholistic living being. Hence, here - given such a conjectured esoteric meaning as "breathfully connected" - a suitable interpretation of καὶ σύμπνοον ὡς ἀήρ would be *and is as breathfully connected as Air,* with 'breath' indicative of πνεῦμα as described in Poemandres 5 and XII:18.

However, a better alternative might be to provide a suitable technical term, open to interpretation, to express whatever esoteric meaning of σύμπνοος is conjectured, with my suggestion being neumæos, from the medieval Latin neumæ using the suffix -os derived from the Greek -ός, with one possible interpretation therefore being 'something' possibly pertaining to πνεῦμα', giving thus the translation *and is neumæos, as is Air.*

insubstantial. τὸ μὴ σκληρόν does not imply the literal what "is not hard" but rather the metaphorical what is 'insubstantial', whose form is thus not solid, not firm, but non-substantial and which therefore cannot be correctly known through touch and sight.

unmixturous. The meaning of ἀσφίγγωτος is unclear since it occurs only here, with suggestions ranging from 'not fastened', 'not bound', 'not tight', and 'loose'. However, I am inclined to accept Scott's emendation of ἀσύνθετον - qv. τὸ

πρῶτον σύνθετον εἶδος (the initial mixturous/composed form) in v. 3 - giving thus unmixturous, not composite.

undissolved. Reading διαλυόμενον with Parthey et al.

actuosity. ἐνέργεια. Qv. tractate XII:21. The English term actuosity derives from the classical Latin actuosus and expresses the Greek here better than the word 'energy' given the modern connotations of that word. The meaning is of (often vigorous) activity or occurrences either natural or which result from the actions of divinities or daimons or mortals.

that bringing-into-being within theos. τὴν ἐν θεῷ γένεσιν. Cf. Poemandres 26, ἐν θεῷ γίνονται. Both imply a "uniting with theos" to thus 'become-of' what is no longer mortal but rather both deathless and 'of theos'.

7.

Refine yourself. As often in other hermetic tractates - qv. Poemandres 10, 22, and VI:3 - καθαρός signifies not just the literal 'physically clean' but being 'refined' in terms of appearance, behaviour, manners, cleanliness, speech, learning, and thought.

brutish. Given the metaphysical context, and the contrast with καθαρός, ἄλογος implies more than 'irrational' or 'unreasonable'. The sense is of the unrefined, the uncultured, the brutish.

alastoras. Since the Greek word τιμωρία is specific and personal, implying vengeance, retribution, and also a divine punishment, it seems apposite to try and keep, in English, the personal sense even though no specific deeds or deeds are mentioned in the text, but especially because of what follows: Τιμωροὺς γὰρ ἐν ἐμαυτῷ ἔχω, ὦ πάτερ. Hence my interpretation, "the brutish alastoras of Materies," using the English term alastoras - singular, *alastor*, from the Greek ἀλάστωρ, an avenging deity, and also a person who avenges certain deeds. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 1497-1508.

materies. ὕλη. A variant form of the Latin *materia*, thus avoiding the English word 'matter' which now has connotations, derived from sciences such as Physics, that are not or may not be relevant here. In addition, the term requires contextual, metaphysical, interpretation, for as used here it may or may not be equivalent to the ὕλη of Poemandres 10, of III:1, και τα λοιπά. Hence why I have here chosen 'materies' rather than - as in those other tractates - 'substance'.

unknowing. In respect of ἀγνοέω here, 'unknowing' is a more suitable English word than 'ignorance', given its meaning, usage (past - as in the *Cloud of*

Unknowing - and present) and given the context. Cf. Poemandres 27, ἀγνωσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, and Poemandres 32, ἐν ἀγνοίαι τοῦ γένους.

Vengerisse. A personification here in respect of one of the alastoras, rather than impersonally assumptive words such as 'torment/punishment' which in my opinion do not fully express the ethos of the Greek. Vengerisse is an alternative spelling of *Vengeress*: a woman who exacts vengeance, who does deeds of retribution; from the Latin *vindicare* via the Anglo-Norman *venger* whence the word *vengeance*. The spelling *vengerisse* occurs in Chaucer's 1374 translation of De Consolatione Philosophiae.

The personifications which follow - ἄγνοια, ἀκρασία, κ.τ.λ. - designate (i) the particular deed or deeds that the alastor in question has arrived to avenge, and/or (ii) the character trait or traits which has or have drawn that particular alastor to a person in order torment them and exact vengeance, retribution.

In the case of ἄγνοια, the suggestion therefore seems to be that this is wilful unknowing, born out of arrogance.

Unrestraint. ἀκρασία. In relation to a person, the Greek means 'lack of control' and thus implies someone who cannot restrain themselves and thus who is self-indulgent; and it is somewhat unfortunate that some translators have opted here to use the word 'incontinence' given what that English word imputes in medical terms.

Unfairness. In respect of δίκη as fairness, and personified as a goddess, qv. Hesiod, Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι, 213-218,

> σὺ δ᾽ ἄκουε δίκης, μηδ᾽ ὕβριν ὄφελλε:
> ὕβρις γάρ τε κακὴ δειλῷ βροτῷ: οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλὸς
> 215 ῥηιδίως φερέμεν δύναται, βαρύθει δέ θ᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς
> ἐγκύρσας ἄτῃσιν: ὁδὸς δ᾽ ἑτέρηφι παρελθεῖν
> κρείσσων ἐς τὰ δίκαια: Δίκη δ᾽ ὑπὲρ Ὕβριος ἴσχει
> ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα: παθὼν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω
>
> You should listen to Fairness and not oblige Hubris
> Since Hubris harms unfortunate mortals while even the more fortunate
> Are not equal to carrying that heavy a burden, meeting as they do with Mischief.
> The best path to take is the opposite one: that of honour
> For, in the end, Fairness is above Hubris
> Which is something the young come to learn from adversity.

Putridity. The Greco-Roman sense of κακία is personal, not abstract, imputing rottenness: a rotten, putrid, bad physis (character, nature, disposition). This bad physis is revealed by personal deeds, such as cowardice, malice, corruption, depravity, and hubris.

inner mortal. ἐνδιάθετον ἄνθρω. In respect of ἐνδιάθετος, an alternative to 'inner' would be 'enclosed', with the Greek word occurring in relation to Stoic philosophy where a distinction was sometimes made (qv. Theophilus of Antioch) between λόγος ἐνδιάθετος (the inner or 'esoteric' logos) and λόγος προφορικός (the outer or 'exoteric' logos).

incarcerated. The Greek word used, δεσμωτήριον, is interesting as it does not imply a 'prison' as the word prison is mostly conceived of today, a large building in which people are confined together. Composed as the Greek is from δεσμός (bonds, shackles) and τηρέω (watch, guard) it signifies a place where a person is guarded and shackled, as for example in medieval dungeons. Occurring as the word does in conjunction with σῶμα (body) and ἀναγκάζω (compel, using force including torture) the suggestion seems to be of the alastoras tormenting or torturing a person while that person is confined, incarcerated, within their mortal body. Cf. John 3:24, βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν, which implies a forceful 'throwing' or a hurling into a guarded cage, not "cast into prison."

generous. Qv. the comment on ἐξ ἐλέου θεοῦ in v. 3.

which is what the way and logos of Palingenesis consists of. καὶ οὕτω συνίσταται ὁ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τρόπος καὶ λόγος. Literally, "and thus consists the way and logos of the Palingenesis." Since the meaning of λόγος here is a matter of conjecture, I have transliterated it, although I incline toward the view that here it is used as a metaphysical term as in the Poemandres, as for example in v. 9, λόγῳ ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν, "whose logos brought forth another perceiveration," and as in Cyrilli Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium:

> μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος ὁ ἐξ αὐτῆς γεννηθεὶς τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός ὁ ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεὸς ἀληθινός τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φωτός ὁ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο τά τε ἐν τῶι οὐρανῶι καὶ τὰ ἐν τῆι γῆι
>
> only-offspring of the logos of theos, born from the essence [οὐσία] of the father, genuine theos from genuine theos, the phaos from the phaos, by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being

8.

Speak quietly...and keep this secret. σιώπησον...καὶ εὐφήμησον. Not a literal 'keep silent and do not say anything' since it is a formulaic phrase, with εὐφημέω suggestive of 'speak softly/quietly' due to either religions reverence (cf. VIII:5, XIII:8, κ.τ.λ.) or personal politeness/deference, and with σιωπάω suggestive of 'keep secret'.

Henceforward be pleased. The English word 'rejoice' - in respect of χαίρω - is

unsuitable here given the preceding εὐφημέω, and the association of the word with Christian worship past and present where it implies 'exult' and show/feel 'great joy'.

having refinement through the Cræfts of theos. ἀνακαθαιρό μενος ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεσιν. Regarding καθαρός as implying 'refinement', qv. the comment on v. 7.

Cræft - the older spelling, meaning, and pronunciation of craft - is, when so spelled, appropriate in reference to the use of δύναμις in this tractate, implying as it does, in an exoteric context, what the terms strength/power/force denote, while implying in an esoteric context (as often in this tractate) a particular Arte, the application of particular abilities, skills, and knowledge, especially abilities, skills, and knowledge learned in the traditional manner from a master or from a mistress of the Arte or Arts in question. In this esoteric sense, theos is the Master Craftsman, with Palingenesis being a Cræft, an Arte, that can be taught and learned. A Cræft is thus - for an individual - an ability, a capability, while it can also be, in respect of others, influential.

Thus, in this and other tractates the context can suggest alternatives such as 'influence' - qv. v. 9 in respect of the Alastoras, and tractate III:3 - or 'capability', qv. XI:3 and XII:20.

The word cræft also has the advantage of implying the plural, such as in the expression "the Cræft of theos."

comprehend. Considering the preceding σιώπησον the sense of ἀρθρόω here is not the literal 'articulate' the logos (by means of words spoken) but rather to be able to articulate it interiorly, clearly, and thus comprehend it for oneself.

arrivance. In respect of the unusual - but metaphysically appropriate - English word 'arrivance', cf. Luke 19:10, ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός, "the arrivance of the Son of Man was to seek and to save what was lost."

knowledge. γνῶσις. Cf. Poemandres 26, τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθὸν τέλος τοῖς γνῶσιν ἐσχηκόσι, and also γνῶσις ἁγία in v. 18 here, where the Greek might usefully be transliterated as gnosis.

knowledge of Delightfulness. Cf. v. 18: διὰ σοῦ τὸ νοητὸν φῶς ὑμνῶν χαίρω ἐν χαρᾷ νοῦ, through you, a song of apprehended phaos, delighted with delightful perceiverance.

9.

influxious. Derived from 'influxion' - one of which meanings is 'influence' - and denoting a powerful influence, as in the 17th century book *England's Teares For*

The Present Warres by James Howell, "the Moon hath an influxious power."

Grade. βαθμὸς. It is possible that this is a technical - esoteric - term which could also be translated as 'degree' indicative as the term seems to be of some mystical progression by a supplicant or initiate. However, the tractate does not provide any evidence as to what such a progression was from and to, or what the other grades might have been.

Ancestral Custom. δικαιοσύνη. The meaning is not 'righteousness', which imposes abstract theological meanings (mostly derived from the Old and New Testaments) on the text, but rather 'respectful of custom', of dutifully doing one's duty toward both the gods and other mortals. This Hellenic - this personal - meaning derives from understanding δίκη personified as the goddess of both Fairness *and of* Tradition (Ancestral Custom) with 'fairness' a more apt description of the word δίκη, given that terms such as justice and judgement have acquired, over millennia, abstract (and often legalistic) meanings which are not relevant to either the culture of ancient Hellas or to the Hellenic milieu of the Corpus Hermeticum. The Tradition, the ancestral custom, of ancient Hellas - with the attendant mythology and legends - was recounted by Hesiod in Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι (Works and Days) and in Θεογονία (Theogony).

Qv. δικαιοσύνη μου, τὸ δίκαιον ὕμνει δι΄ ἐμοῦ in v. 18.

vindicated. In respect of ἐδικαιώθημεν (qv. δικαιόω) what is not implied is 'made righteous' or 'made pure' - which are meanings derived from Christian exegesis, cf. ὁ δίκαιος δικαιοσύνην ποιησάτω ἔτι, Revelation 22:11 - but rather 'vindicated', justified, and in this case because Unfairness was *in absentia*, having fled with there thus being no need for any further deliberations.

community. κοινωνέω imputes the sense of 'sharing in common or in partnership', that is, a community of shared interests, which is the opposite of individual covetousness.

With that departed. Referring to the departure of Coveter, the personification here of covetousness.

Actualis. A borrowing from the Latin root to personify 'actuality', qv. the comment in v. 6 on Τί οὖν ἀληθές ἐστιν ὦ Τρισμέγιστε.

the noble has been returned. However τὸ ἀγαθὸν is interpreted - whether as the conventional 'the good', or as I interpret depending on context, 'the noble', 'the highest nobility', 'the honourable' - the literal meaning of πεπλήρωται here - denoting "τὸ ἀγαθὸν is completed", "τὸ ἀγαθὸν has been fulfilled", "τὸ ἀγαθὸν is full" - is somewhat obscure, especially if one compares it to an apposite context such as John 3:29,

> ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην νυμφίος ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου, ὁ ἑστηκὼς

καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ, χαρᾷ χαίρει διὰ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ νυμφίου. αὕτη οὖν ἡ χαρὰ ἡ ἐμὴ πεπλήρωται

He who has an espousess is the spouse, and the friend of the spouse - who stands by him and listens - is joyous with joy because of his words. Hence, my own joy is complete.

In tractate IV:4, πληρόω is also apposite,

Καὶ ποῦ αὐτὸν ἱδρύσατο.
Κρατῆρα μέγαν πληρώσας τούτου κατέπεμψε δοὺς κήρυκα καὶ ἐκέλευσεν αὐτῶι κηρύξαι ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καρδίαις τάδε...

Where, then, was it placed?
In that large repleteful chaldron which was dispatched down with an envoy assigned to declaim to the hearts of mortals...

Thus, I am inclined to consider that here the usage is metaphorical, suggestive of τὸ ἀγαθὸν having been completed (i) as in restored, returned to the person before the intervention of "the brutish Alastoras of Materies", who undermined, replaced, or who saught to replace τὸ ἀγαθὸν with such things as Grief, Unrestraint, Lascivity, and Putridity; or (ii) as in, as a gift from theos, completing - refining - the mortal by removing what was detrimental to τὸ ἀγαθὸν and thus to Palingenesis, with this completing - refining - returning them to the necessary state of being, as does the ἄνοδος described in the Poemandres tractate.

phaos. φάος. As with φῶς - qv. Poemandres, κ.τ.λ. - a transliteration since I am inclined to avoid the vague English word 'light' which word now implies many things which the Greek does not or may not; as for instance in the matter of over a thousand years of New Testament exegesis, especially in reference to the gospel of John. A transliteration requires the reader to pause and consider what phaos may, or may not, mean, suggest or imply, especially as φάος metaphorically (qv. Iliad, Odyssey, Hesiod, etcetera) implies the being, the life, 'the spark', of mortals, and, generally, either (i) the illumination, the light, that arises because of the Sun and distinguishes the day from the night, or (ii) any brightness that provides illumination and thus enables things to be seen. In addition, as noted in Poemandres 21 and perhaps relevant here,

φῶς καὶ ζωή ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ ἐγένετο ὁ Ἄνθρωπος

phaos and Life are the theos and the father from whence the human came into being

skotos. σκότος. Given the following τιμωρία and what has preceded, I have personified σκότος here (as Hesiod personified Darkness as Erebos) since it is implausible for 'darkness', understood as absence of light, to punish or seek vengeance.

they whirlingly rushed away. I incline toward the view that in respect of ἐκπέτομαι what is meant is not a literal 'flying away' but a metaphor for 'rushing away' or hastily fleeing. Similarly in respect of ῥοίζῳ which suggests a whirling about in confusion as they flee; cf. Poemandres 11, δινῶν ῥοίζῳ, spinning them around.

Thus concludes what is apparently the initiation into the secret mystery of Palingenesis which began in v. 6 with "thus it is, my son. It ascends, as Fire does, and descends, as Earth does..."

10.

the Dekad brought-into-being. τῆς δεκάδος παραγινομένης. Given that δεκάς is a metaphysical term of the Way of Palingenesis as that Way is explained in this tractate, I have used the transliteration Dekad rather than 'decad'.

geniture of apprehension. νοερὰ γένεσις. Literally, a birthing of apprehension, of the ability to apprehend beyond what the alastoras signify in respect of our mortal nature. As in tractates VI and XI, geniture expresses the contextual meaning of γένεσις here: that which or those whom have their genesis (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else. Here, this 'something else' is the Dekad which produces this particular birthing. In respect of geniture, XI:2 may provide some metaphysical context:

> Ἄκουε, ὦ τέκνον, ὡς ἔχει ὁ θεὸς καὶ τὸ πᾶν. θεός, ὁ αἰών, ὁ κόσμος, ὁ χρόνος, ἡ γένεσις. ὁ θεὸς αἰῶνα ποιεῖ, ὁ αἰὼν δὲ τὸν κόσμον, ὁ κόσμος δὲ χρόνον, ὁ χρόνος δὲ γένεσιν. τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ ὥσπερ οὐσία ἐστὶ [τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ καλόν, ἡ εὐδαιμονία,] ἡ σοφία· τοῦ δὲ αἰῶνος ἡ ταυτότης· τοῦ δὲ κόσμου ἡ τάξις· τοῦ δὲ χρόνου ἡ μεταβολή· τῆς δὲ γενέσεως ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ὁ θάνατος
>
> Hear then, my son, of theos and of everything: theos, Aion, Kronos, Kosmos, geniture. Theos brought Aion into being; Aion: Kosmos; Kosmos, Kronos; Kronos, geniture. It is as if the quidditas of theos is actuality, honour, the beautiful, good fortune, Sophia. Of Aion, identity; of Kosmos, arrangement; of Kronos, variation; of geniture, Life and Death.

banishing those twelve. The aforementioned alastoras, such as Grief and Lascivity.

by this geniture we are of theos. ἐθεώθημεν τῇ γενέσει. Cf. θεωθῆναι in Poemandres 26. As there, this does not mean or imply mortals become 'divinizied' or 'deified' - "made into gods" - but rather it means θέωσις in the Hellenic, hermetic, sense of being mystically (re)united with theos but still being mortal, human, because there is and cannot be any partaking of, any participation in, the essence, the quidditas - οὐσία - of theos, a sense well

expressed centuries later by Maximus of Constantinople:

> τῆς ἐπὶ τῷ θεωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μυστικῆς ἐνεργείας λήψεται πέρας κατὰ πάντα τρόπον χωρὶς μόνης δηλονότι τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος. Quæstiones ad Thalassium de Scriptura Sacra, XXII [Migne, Patrologiae Graeca, 90, c.0318]
>
> the end of the opus mysterium of human beings becoming of Theos can be in all ways except one, namely that of having the identity of His Essence

That is, Palingenesis means that mortals become *of* theos, not that they become theos or theoi. This may well explain the reading of the MSS, ἐθεωρήθημεν, amended by Nock (after Reitzenstein) to ἐθεώθημεν. For it is possible that the hermetic θέωσις implied, in practice, a contemplative type of life; a style of life hinted at in v. 2 - "noetic sapientia is in silence" - and in v. 7 when Hermes says to Thoth, "Go within: and an arriving. Intend: and an engendering. Let physical perceptibility rest, and divinity will be brought-into-being." Cf. Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ in v. 11.

that generosity. The definite article - *the* generosity - points to the meaning: not ἔλεος per se but rather the generosity of theos who gifts this geniture.

they consist of such. The MSS have συνιστάμενος - Nock, συνιστάμενον - and although some emendations have been proposed, including the addition of νοητῶν (ἐκ νοητῶν) and Reitzenstein suggesting a lacuna between γνωρίζει and ἐκ τούτων, what is referred to seems obvious: they consist of, are composed from, such things that are of - are derived from - theos.

11.

quietude engendered by theos. Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ. With ἀκλινής understood metaphorically, cf. σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ in v. 2.

the seeing is not of... In respect of φαντάζομαι, cf. XI:18, κεῖται γὰρ ἄλλως ἐν ἀσωμάτωι φαντασίαι.

through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. τῇ διὰ δυνάμεων νοητικῇ ἐνεργείᾳ. In respect of 'cræft', cf. ἀνακαθαιρό μενος ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεσιν in v. 8. In regard to noetic, qv. the comment on σοφία νοερὰ in v. 2. In respect of actuosity, qv. the comment on ἐνέργεια in v. 6.

The metaphysical content of this statement, important both in respect of what immediately follows - which bears comparison with XI:18-19 (see below) - and in respect of understanding Palingenesis, has been somewhat lost in previous translations such as "with the mental energy that comes through the powers" and "with the energy the Mind gives me through the powers."

What is meant is that there is a specific type of apprehension which is vivifying, which does not depend on what is seen directly by the eyes, and which is a cræft, a capability, an ability, an influencing, arising from the generosity of theos and from that quietude engendered by theos. Thoth then goes on to describe what this apprehension involves: ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...

I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water... Everywhere. ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...πανταχοῦ. Regarding this, and the aforementioned type of apprehension, cf. tractate XI:18-19,

> ἔνια δὲ τῶν λεγομένων ἰδίαν ἔννοιαν ἔχειν ὀφείλει· οἷον ὃ λέγω νόησον. πάντα ἐστὶν ἐν τῶι θεῶι. οὐχ ὡς ἐν τόπωι κείμενα (ὁ μὲν γὰρ τόπος καὶ σῶμά ἐστι, καὶ σῶμα ἀκίνητον, καὶ τὰ κείμενα κίνησιν οὐκ ἔχει)· κεῖται γὰρ ἄλλως ἐν ἀσωμάτωι φαντασίαι. νόησον τὸν περιέχοντα τὰ πάντα καὶ νόησον ὅτι τοῦ ἀσωμάτου οὐδέν ἐστι περιοριστικόν, οὐδὲ ταχύτερον, οὐδὲ δυνατώτερον· αὐτὸ δὲ πάντων καὶ ἀπεριόριστον καὶ ταχύτατον καὶ δυνατώτατον.
>
> καὶ οὕτω νόησον ἀπὸ σεαυτοῦ, καὶ κέλευσόν σου τῆι ψυχῆι εἰς Ἰνδικὴν πορευθῆναι, καὶ ταχύτερόν σου τῆς κελεύσεως ἐκεῖ ἔσται. μετελθεῖν δὲ αὐτῆι κέλευσον ἐπὶ τὸν ὠκεανόν, καὶ οὕτως ἐκεῖ πάλιν ταχέως ἔσται, οὐχ ὡς μεταβᾶσα ἀπὸ τόπου εἰς τόπον, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐκεῖ οὖσα. κέλευσον δὲ αὐτῆι καὶ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναπτῆναι, καὶ οὐδὲ πτερῶν δεηθήσεται. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ αὐτῆι οὐδὲν ἐμπόδιον, οὐ τοῦ ἡλίου πῦρ, οὐχ ὁ αἰθήρ, οὐχ ἡ δίνη, οὐχὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων σώματα· πάντα δὲ διατεμοῦσα ἀναπτήσεται μέχρι τοῦ ἐσχάτου σώματος. εἰ δὲ βουληθείης καὶ αὐτὸ ὅλον διαρρήξασθαι καὶ τὰ ἐκτός εἴ γέ τι ἐκτὸς τοῦ κόσμου θεάσασθαι, ἔξεστί σοι.
>
> Some of the matters spoken of require a certain apprehension, so consider what I say: everything is in the theos but not as if lying in a particular place - since the place is a body and also immovable and what is lain does not move - but an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise.
>
> Thus apprehend what embraces everything and apprehend that the incorporeal has no boundary, that nothing is swifter, nothing as mighty, since the incorporeal is boundless, the swiftest, the mightiest.
>
> And apprehend this about yourself and so urge your psyche to go to any land and, swifter than that urging, it will be there. Likewise, urge it to go to the Ocean and again it will be swiftly there without passing from place to place but as if already there.
>
> Urge it to go up into the heavens and it will be there without the need of any wings. Indeed, nothing will impede it: not the fire of the Sun nor Aether, nor the vortex, nor the bodies of the other stars, but - carving through them all - it will go as far as the furthest body. Should you desire to burst through The Entirety and observe what is

beyond - if indeed there be anything beyond that ordered system - then it is possible for you.

What is that Way? As in vv. 7 and 10, an alternative here for τρόπος would be Art.

12.

dwelling. σκῆνος. The Greek word has been variously interpreted, as 'shelter', 'tent', and, in the New Testament, has been understood metaphorically to mean 'tabernacle' in reference to the body (2 Corinthians 5.1, 5.4). Here, what seems to be suggested, as Hermes later explains, is the deathful body as a temporary dwelling place for what is deathless.

passed beyond. διεξέρχομαι. Passed beyond as in the previous "I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water..." and as in the "go beyond yourself as those who sleepfully dream" of v. 4.

zodiac. ζῳοφόρος. Literally, τοῦ ζῳοφόρου κύκλου implies "the life-bearing circle", referring to the personifications of the zodiacal constellations with the heavens understood as an abode of various divinities, qv. *Hymn to King Helios Dedicated to Sallust*, Πολὺ δὲ πρὸς οἷς ἔφην πλῆθός ἐστι περὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν θεῶν, οὓς κατενόησαν οἱ τὸν οὐρανὸν μὴ παρέργως μηδὲ ὥσπερ τὰ βοσκήματα θεωροῦντες. τοὺς τρεῖς γὰρ τετραχῇ τέμνων διὰ τῆς τοῦ ζῳοφόρου κύκλου πρὸς ἕκαστον αὐτῶν κοινωνίας τοῦτον αὖθις τὸν ζῳοφόρον εἰς δώδεκα θεῶν δυνάμεις διαιρεῖ καὶ μέντοι τούτων ἕκαστον εἰς τρεῖς, ὥστε ποιεῖν ἓξ ἐπὶ τοῖς τριάκοντα. (IV, 148c).

Cf. *De Mundo*, ὧν μέσος ὁ ζωιοφόρος καλούμενος κύκλος ἐγκάρσιος διὰ τῶν τροπικῶν διέζωσται. (Bekker, Aristoteles Opera Omnia, I, 392a)

composed of beings, twelve in number. Omitting the redundant ἀριθμῶν.

same physis. φύσεως μιᾶς. As in other tractates I have transliterated φύσις since in the Hermetica physis is a metaphysical principle or attribute whose meaning goes beyond, but can include, what the English terms 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denote, as the Poemandres tractate makes clear and where physis is, several times, personified, as for example in v. 14,

> ἅμα δὲ τῆι βουλῆι ἐγένετο ἐνέργεια καὶ ὤικησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν

> Then, his want and his vigour realized, and he within that image devoid of logos, Physis grasped he whom she loved to entwine herself around him so that, as lovers,

> they were intimately joined together.

polymorphous. παντόμορφος. Cf. XI:16, ἐπεὶ οὖν ὁ κόσμος παντόμορφος γέγονεν.

difference. διαζυγή. Literally, division, separation, cf. Euripides, Troades, 669 - ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ πῶλος ἥτις ἂν διαζυγῇ τῆς συντραφείσης - and διάζευξις (disunion).

effector of psyche. ψυχογόνος. The 16th century English word *effector* (from the Latin word used by Cicero) is someone or some-thing who or which engenders or produces some-thing. As in other tractates, I have transliterated ψυχή as 'psyche' so as not to impose a particular meaning on the text. Whether what is meant is *anima mundi* - or some-thing else, such as the 'soul' of a human being, or a personification - is a question of contextual interpretation. However interpreted, it is an important, a primal, principle in this and other hermetic tractates, and might imply here the original, ancient Greek, sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; of that 'thing' (or being) which (or who) animates beings making them 'alive'.

with Life and Phaos a unity there where the arithmos of the henad is brought forth from the pneuma. ζωὴ δὲ καὶ φῶς ἡνωμέναι εἰσίν ἔνθα ὁ τῆς ἑνάδος ἀριθμὸς πέφυκε τοῦ πνεύματος. Since this expression is important to understanding the metaphysics described in the tractate it deserves some attention.

i) In respect of Life and Phaos, qv. v. 9.

ii) I have transliterated ἀριθμός here since the context suggests it implies more than the English word 'number' understood as a particular abstraction representing the quantity of 'things'; qv. Aristotle, ἄλλος δέ τις τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τὸν τῶν εἰδῶν ἕνα εἶναι, ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον εἶνα (Metaphysics, Book XIII, 1080b.20). Given such a distinction - and the discussion regarding ἀριθμός and Pythagoras in Book XIII, 1083b.10 et seq, and given the occurrence of ἀριθμός with μονάς in tractate IV,

> μονὰς οὖσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἑτέρου ἀριθμοῦ...
>
> Just as the Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos without itself being enfolded by any, begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any...

ἀριθμός is suggestive of a metaphysical (and/or of an esoteric, hermetic) principle or attribute - such as being an effluvium, or an emanation, of theos/monas/The One - whose outward (esoteric) appearance or representation is often assumed to be a particular 'numerical' quantity. As to whether or not what is suggested in the tractate regarding ἀριθμός is indicative of the metaphysics of Pythagoras, or represents a similar but different mystical

tradition, is an interesting question.

In terms of mystical tradition, there is a subtle difference between effluvia and emanations, with emanation often understood in the sense of some-thing proceeding from, or having, a source; as for example in theological use where the source is considered to be theos or some aspect of a divinity or God. Effluvium, however, has (so far as I am aware) no theological connotations and accurately describes a particular perceiveration: a flowing of what-is, sans the assumption of a primal cause, and sans a division or a distinction between 'us' – we mortals – and some-thing else, be this some-thing else theos, God, a divinity, the numinous, or some assumed, ideated, cause, essence, origin, or form. Effluvia presence, manifest - or can presence and manifest in sentient beings such as ourselves, via for example a Way such as Palingenesis - the divine, the numinous.

iii) I have translated ἑνάς as 'henad' - avoiding the prosaic translation 'unit' - given the metaphysical context, the aforementioned comparison with IV:10, the equivalance of ἑνάς and μονάς, and also the following, from tractate XII:15,

> ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις συνθέτοις πᾶσι σώμασιν ἀριθμὸς ἑκάστου ἐστί. χωρὶς γὰρ ἀριθμοῦ σύστασιν ἢ σύνθεσιν ἢ διάλυσιν ἀδύνατον γενέσθαι· αἱ δὲ ἑνάδες τὸν ἀριθμὸν γεννῶσι καὶ αὔξουσι καὶ πάλιν διαλυόμενον εἰς ἑαυτὰς δέχονται, καὶ ἡ ὕλη μία.
>
> Yet in other combined corpora there is for each of them an arithmos, for without arithmos it is not possible for such a bringing together, such a melding, such a dissolution, to come-into-being. Henads beget and grow arithmos and, on its dissolution, receive it into themselves.

iv) As in other tractates, I have transliterated πνεῦμα (as pneuma) since, as with ψυχή - κ.τ.λ. - it is suggestive here of a particular metaphysical (and/or of an esoteric, hermetic) attribute, requiring contextual interpretation consistent with what is currently understood of Greco-Roman mysticism and metaphysics. The usual translation of 'spirit' can impose Christian, modern philosophical and other contemporary, meanings on the text.

13.

All That Exists. τὸ πᾶν. Literally, 'the all', but metaphysically implying 'all that exists', that is, the Universe, the Kosmos. Qv. the Cantio Arcana (Esoteric Song) of vv. 17-18, and also XII:22-23 where the term is synonymous with theos.

> τοῦτό ἐστιν ὁ θεός, τὸ πᾶν. ἐν δὲ τῶι παντὶ οὐδέν ἐστιν ὃ μὴ ἔστιν ὁ θεός· ὅθεν οὔτε μέγεθος οὔτε τόπος οὔτε ποιότης οὔτε σχῆμα οὔτε χρόνος περὶ τὸν θεόν ἐστι· πᾶν γάρ ἐστι, τὸ δὲ πᾶν διὰ πάντων καὶ περὶ πάντα.
>
> this is theos, All That Exists. For in all that exists there is no-thing that he is not.

> Therefore, neither size, nor location nor disposition, nor appearance, nor age, are about theos. For he is all that exists; encompassing everything and within everything

When the context merits it, and to avoid awkward phraseology, I have sometimes translated τὸ πᾶν as Kosmos, as at vv. 18 and 19.

the perceiveration. τῷ νοΐ. Which perceiveration was mentioned in v. 11: "the seeing is not of the sight from the eyes but that through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air..."

In effect, this perceiveration is of theos, and thus (i) of perceiving that 'all that exists' - including ourselves - are emanations of theos, or (ii) of perceiving that 'all that exists', including ourselves, are effluvia and thus presence, manifest - or can presence and manifest, via for example the Way of Palingenesis - the divine, the numinous, with theos thus understood as the artisan who crafted ourselves and every-thing else:

> Ἐπειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός, οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγωι, ὥστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου, τῆι δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα (Tractate IV:1)
>
> Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos you should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, as One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

Which metaphysical understanding is not only rather lost in conventional translations of ἐμαυτὸν ἐν τῷ νοΐ such as "I see myself in Mind," but which also introduce an abstraction, an ἰδέα, 'the mind', which detracts from an appreciation of emanations of theos and effluvia of the numinous.

No more to present the body in three separations. τὸ μηκέτι φαντά ζεσθαι εἰς τὸ σῶμα τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν. Or, less literally, "no more to present the body in three separate ways." And 'no more' because the perceiveration is of 'all that exists' as either emanations of theos (the One) or presencings of the divine, the monadic numinous.

i) *to present*. That is, to present - to show - in a particular manner. In respect of φαντάζεσθαι, cf. Aeschylus, Agamemnon,

> μηδ᾽ ἐπιλεχθῇς
> Ἀγαμεμνονίαν εἶναί μ᾽ ἄλοχον.
> φανταζόμενος δὲ γυναικὶ νεκροῦ
> τοῦδ᾽ ὁ παλαιὸς δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ
> Ἀτρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατῆρος
> τόνδ᾽ ἀπέτεισεν

τέλεον νεαροῖς ἐπιθύσας.

> But do not add to those words that it was me who was the mistress of Agamemnon
> Since the wife of this corpse presents herself here
> As that most ancient fierce Avenger.
> It is Atreus, he of that cruel feast,
> Who, in payment for that, has added to his young victims
> This adult one.

ii) *separations*. As noted in my commentary on tractate IV:1, what is not meant by διαστατός is 'dimension', given what the term 'dimension' now imputes scientifically and otherwise. What is expressed in IV:1 may also be relevant here:

> τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἄλλωι τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον· οὔτε γὰρ πῦρ ἐστιν οὔτε ὕδωρ οὔτε ἀὴρ οὔτε πνεῦμα, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.
>
> That Being has no body that can be touched or seen or measured or which is separable or which is similar to any other body: not of Fire or Water or of Pneuma even though all such things are from that Being.

Thus, to translate τὸ μηκέτι φαντά ζεσθαι εἰς τὸ σῶμα τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν as something like "no longer to picture the three-dimensional body" is to introduce two fairly recent, and unnecessary, abstractions: that of to picture/visualize - as if in some-thing denoted by the term 'mind' - and that of 'three-dimensions'. Whereas what the Greek expresses is relatively simple and suitable to the milieu of Greco-Roman mysticism: of not seeing, of not representing, the body in three particular ways. What these three separate ways are is open to interpretation, but the context suggests in terms of physicality, of psyche, and of pneuma.

through this disclosure. Although 'disclosure' seems apposite, λόγος could be translated here - as in the title - as 'discourse'.

Between τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν and διὰ τὸν λόγον, Nock et al indicate a lacuna, although it is possible to make some sense of what is here rather obscure Greek. [An overview of some of the problems here - in the context of the meaning of the following διάβολος - is given by Anna Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès: Pratiques rituelles et traités hermétiques*, Brill (Leiden), 2012, pp.100-4]

written about for you alone. Reading ὅν εἰς σὲ μόνον ὑπεμνηματισάμην with Reitzenstein et al, and taking ὑπεμνηματισάμην to refer to 'writing about' Palingenesis.

rouner. διάβολος. In regard to the Old English word *rouner* - denoting a person who whispers secrets or who spreads rumours in a secretive, disruptive,

manner - qv. the Prologue of the 14th century *Cloud Of Unknowing*,

> Fleschely janglers, opyn preisers and blamers of hemself or of any other, tithing tellers, rouners and tutilers of tales

Also, cf. 2 Timothy 3:3, ἄστοργοι, ἄσπονδοι, διάβολοι, ἀκρατεῖς (unloving, unforgiving, rouners, unrestrained) where mention is made of ἀκρατής, which in this tractate is personified as one of the Alastoras.

I take the following τοῦ παντὸς as referring to keeping the silence - the secrets - as mentioned in v. 22, rather than as referring to the preceding τὸ πᾶν.

the many. τοὺς πολλούς. It is possible to take this pejoratively and thus as referring to 'plebal outsiders', to 'the masses', the plebeians.

but instead to whomsoever theos himself desires. Reading ἀλλ᾽ εἰς οὓς ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸς θέλει with Reitzenstein. The text is obscure to the point of being corrupt, with various emendations having been proposed, and thus my translation is somewhat conjectural.

14.

Speak quietly. Qv. v. 8

constituted of such crælts. Such crælts as Palingenesis, and thus such abilities as a crælt confers.

disrespected. ἀσεβεῖσθαι. Qv. Lysias, Funeral Oration, 2.7,

> Ἀθηναῖοι ἡγησάμενοι ἐκείνους μέν εἴ τι ἠδίκουν, ἀποθανόντας δίκην ἔχειν τὴν μεγίστην τοὺς δὲ κάτω τὰ αὐτῶν οὐ κομίζεσθαι ἱερῶν δὲ μιαινομένων τοὺς ἄνω θεοὺς ἀσεβεῖσθαι
>
> the Athenians considered that if those ones had done harm then their death was the greater punishment, with those in the realms below not being attended to, and - with their consecrated places defiled - the gods above were being disrespected

Also, cf. Poemandres 23,

> τοῖς δὲ ἀνοήτοις καὶ κακοῖς καὶ πονηροῖς καὶ φθονεροῖς καὶ πλεονέκταις καὶ φονεῦσι καὶ ἀσεβέσι πόρρωθέν εἰμι
>
> I keep myself distant from the unreasonable, the rotten, the malicious, the jealous, the greedy, the bloodthirsty, the hubriatic

the quiddity of geniture. τῆς οὐσιωδοῦς γενέσεως. A metaphysical expression

which, in context, signifies that the essentiality, the realness, of the particular bringing-into-being that is Palingenesis - with its perception of effluvia (or of emanations of theos) and of the mortal being 'all that exists' - is far removed from the physis that ordinary perception associates with the physical body.

engendered of theos. θεὸς πέφυκας. That is, reborn through Palingenesis because of theos. The following καὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς παῖς provides the necessary context. In respect of Palingenesis signifying becoming *of* theos (as a child is *of* the parent) and not becoming theos or theoi, qv. the comment on v. 6, "by this geniture we are of theos." Cf. φύσει μεν πέφυκας θεός (Josephus Hymnographicus, *Feast of Saint Basilissa*, Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 105, 1120) and δόξης γέμων θεός πέφυκας (Joannes Geometra, *Carmina Varia*, Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 106, 997)

15.

song. ὕμνος. Not a 'hymn' in the Christian sense (which the word hymn now so often imputes) but rather celebrating the numinous, and theos, in song, verse (ode), and chant.

you said you heard from those influences when you reached the Ogdoad. The Ogdoad - ὄγδοος, the eighth - relates to Poemandres 26, τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν, the ogdoadic physis which is beyond the seven spheres, the reaching of which is celebrated in song, ὑμνεῖ σὺν τοῖς οὖσι τὸν πατέρα, which signifies the end of the mortal anados (ἄνοδος) and where the mortal hears 'the influences' - those of The Cræft - who or which are beyond the ogdoad celebrating theos in melodious song, τινων δυνάμεων ὑπὲρ τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν φωνῆι τινι ἡδείαι ὑμνουσῶν τὸν θεόν.

There are several ways of interpreting the text here and what follows. If one accepts the emendation σου (Nock, after Reitzenstein) then Thoth is asking to hear the song Hermes heard when he reached the Ogdoad, while if one reads, with the MSS, μου, then Thoth is asking for the song Hermes said Thoth would hear when Thoth himself reaches the Ogdoad. In addition, τῶν δυνάμεων in association with either σου ἀκοῦσαι or μου ἀκοῦσαι is awkward, implying "heard from The Cræft" - or, in exoteric terms, "from the (those) Powers/Forces /Influences/" - when whomsoever reaches the Ogdoad, and which inclines one to ask, whose or what influences/powers? Those mentioned, for example, in vv. 8-9, such as Delightfulness, Self-Restraint, and Perseverance? If so, are these influences, collectively, The Cræft itself personified and who thus, through the generosity of theos, enable Palingenesis?

On balance, given the reference to Poemandres 26, I am inclined to accept the emendation σου and take 'the influences' as referring to those of The Cræft, some of whom are personified in vv. 8-9, and which 'influences' are those who in Poemandres 26 are "celebrating theos in melodious song."

divined about the Ogdoad. Taking καθὼς Ὀγδοάδα ὁ Ποιμάνδρης ἐθέσπισε with τέκνον, not with the preceding ἀκοῦσαι τῶν δυνάμεων.

Poemandres, the perceiveration of authority. Qv. Poemandres 2, εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς. As there, the title implies "What (knowledge) I reveal (or am about to reveal) is authentic," so that an alternative translation, in keeping with the hermeticism of the text, would be "I am Pœmandres, the authentic perceiveration."

and entrusting me to presence the beautiful. καὶ ἐπέτρεψέ μοι ἐκεῖνος ποιεῖν τὰ καλά. While an alternative translation is "and entrusting me to presence the noble," it does not immediately connect to what follows: of beautifully presencing such beautiful things as the esoteric song (υμνωδία κρύπτη, cantio arcana) which Hermes proceeds to teach to Thoth.

16.

except to you at your completion. εἰ μὴ σοὶ ἐπὶ τέλει τοῦ παντός. More literally, "except to you at the ending of the whole." That is, at the ending of the initiation into the secret of Palingenesis.

respectfully. That is, reverentially. The sense of προσκυνέω here does not necessarily imply a 'kneeling down' or some sort of what the Greeks (and the Romans) would undoubtedly have described as a 'barbarian adoration' or prostration as if in worship of Helios or of some-thing. It also does not necessarily imply a type of body-bent bowing, a stooping, toward a particular person (cf. Herodotus, I:119.1, ἅρπαγος μὲν ὡς ἤκουσε ταῦτα, προσκυνήσας καὶ μεγάλα ποιησάμενος ὅτι τε ἡ ἁμαρτὰς οἱ ἐς δέον ἐγεγόνεε καὶ ὅτι ἐπὶ τύχῃσι χρηστῇσι ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἐκέκλητο, ἤιε ἐς τὰ οἰκία).

What such respect, in this particular case, involved is unknown although the tractate - with its invokations of Self-Restraint, the imperturbable, the unwaveringly noble, of a contemplative silence, and its declamation of "go within" - is suggestive of a simple, unadorned, silent, respect for the numinous and the divine, as might perhaps be manifest in a slight bowing of the head. Cf. John 4:20 where the type of reverence is also unknown,

> οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ προσεκύνησαν· καὶ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἰεροσολύμοις ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ὅπου προσκυνεῖν δεῖ.
>
> Our ancestors gave reverence on this mountain but you say that the necessary place of reverence is in Jerusalem.

17.

Logos Δ. The MSS at this point have the heading υμνωδία κρύπτη, λόγος Δ. While υμνωδία κρύπτη is understandable - Esoteric Song, Cantio Arcana, Secret Chant - the meaning of λόγος Δ is conjectural, with suggestions including The Fourth Song, The Fourth Formula, and the Fourth Discourse, with the obvious implication that there are, or were, four such hermetic songs, formulae, or discourses, with various suggestions as to those other three, such as Poemandres 31, tractate V:10, and Asclepius 41, all of which are relatively short.

every Physis of Kosmos. Among the presencings of the Kosmos described here by their physis are Earth, Trees, the Heavens, Air, and Water.

In respect of Kosmos and physis, qv. tractate XII:14,

> ἀνάγκη δὲ καὶ ἡ πρόνοια καὶ ἡ φύσις ὄργανά ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου
>
> Necessitas, forseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos

Gaia. γῆ. Earth as elemental principle, hence the personification here since Earth is being directly, personally, invoked.

open. ἀνοίγνυμι. Cf. Papyri Graecae Magicae, XXXVI. 312ff. The term was often used in both mystic odes and in classical magicae incantations. The Latin *aperio* well expresses the sense, as in "aperire librum et septem signacula eius," (Jerome, Revelation V:5) and "et cum aperuisset sigillum secundum." (Jerome, Revelation VI:3)

μοχλός. Here, not a literal 'bolt' or 'lock' but what prevents (access to) or is a defence against something.

Abyss. ἀβύσσου. This is the emendation of Reitzenstein for the various readings of the MSS. Nock has ὄμβρου which does not make sense here, for why "open what prevents" rain? In respect of ἄβυσσος, qv. tractate III:1.

incurvate. This unusual English term is appropriate here to poetically suggest the sense of the Greek - σείω - which is to bend from side to side as if shaken by an earthquake, by a trembling of the Earth.

Master Artisan. κτίσεως κύριον. 'Founding Lord', or less poetically, Lord of Creation. Theos as creator-artisan is mentioned in Poemandres 9, with the term there, and in tractate IV:1, being δημιουργόν. Qv. also δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών (the craft of theos: Aion) in tractate XI:3.

clan. κύκλος. Here signifying a particular group, or a particular assembly, of people as in the English expression "the inner circle." Hence, "the clan of

theos".

Sweet water. γλυκὺ ὕδωρ. The sweetness of water suitable to drink. Cf. John 4:10, ὕδωρ ζῶν, the 'living water' - that is, the water of life, ὕδωρ ζωῆς.

bring light to. In respect of φαίνω as 'bringing light', cf. Plato, Timaeus, 39b,

> φῶς ὁ θεὸς ἀνῆψεν ἐν τῇ πρὸς γῆν δευτέρᾳ τῶν περιόδων, ὃ δὴ νῦν κεκλήκαμεν ἥλιον, ἵνα ὅτι μάλιστα εἰς ἅπαντα φαίνοι τὸν οὐρανὸν
>
> theos ignited a light in that second circle from Earth, named now as Helios, so that it could bring light to all of the heavens

fond celebration. Regarding εὐλογία in a neutral way which does not impute the Christian sense of "praise the Lord", qv. Poemandres 22,

> παραγίνομαι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ὁ Νοῦς τοῖς ὁσίοις καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς καὶ ἐλεήμοσι, τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσι, καὶ ἡ παρουσία μου γίνεται βοήθεια, καὶ εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσιν εὐλογοῦντες καὶ ὑμνοῦντες τεταγμένως πρὸς αὐτὸν τῇ στοργῇ
>
> I, perceiveration, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

my Arts. As at Poemandres 31 - which is also a traditional doxology (δοξολογία) to theos - the sense of δυνάμεων is not 'powers', forces (or something similar and equally at variance with such a laudation) but 'arts'; that is, particular abilities, qualities, and skills. Here, these abilities and skills - the craft - relate to esoteric song; to be able to be an effective laudator in respect of theos and "every Physis of Kosmos."

18.

numinous. ἅγιος. As in the Poemandres tractate and other tractates.

knowledge. As at Poemandres 26, γνῶσις here could be transliterated as gnosis although I incline toward the view that such a transliteration might - given what the term gnosis now imputes, as for example in being a distinct 'spiritual way' - lead to incorrectly imposing modern meanings on the text.

numinal understanding. φωτίζω here implies an understanding given by a divinity, as for example in spiritual enlightenment, something that is not conveyed if a single word such as 'enlightened' is used as a translation. In order to express something of the Greek, I had used the term 'numinal understanding' with numinal implying 'divine' as at tractate III:1,

Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῖον καὶ φύσις θεία

The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis.

phaos. As at Poemandres 4ff - and in other tractates - a transliteration of φῶς - using the the Homeric φάος, given that it (like physis) is a fundamental principle of Hermetic weltanschauungen and one which the overused English word 'light', with all its modern and Christian interpretations, does not satisfactorily express.

mastery. Implying mastery over one's self, cf. Chaucer, The Physician's Tale: "Bacus hadde of hir mouth right no maistrie." (v. 58)

respectful of custom. δίκαιος. Not 'righteous', which imposes abstract theological meanings (mostly derived from the Old and New Testaments) on the text, but rather 'respectful of custom', of dutifully doing one's duty (that is, being honourable) toward both the gods and other mortals.

Honesty. ἀλήθεια. Given that those who are urged to sing are personifications, this is not some abstract, disputable, 'truth' but as often elsewhere in classical literature, a revealing, a dis-covering, of what is real as opposed to what is apparent or outer appearance. In personal terms, being honest and truthful.

Through me, may Kosmos accept... δι΄ ἐμοῦ δέξαι τὸ πᾶν λόγῳ. I take this with the following λογικὴν θυσίαν, and τὸ πᾶν as vocative, and poetically combine the unnecessary λόγῳ with λογικὴν. As punctuated by Nock et al it would with λογικὴν θυσίαν literally be something such as "through me accept in speech All That Exists/the Kosmos, an offering spoken," which - in the context of the song and of theos being τὸ πᾶν, All That Exists/the Kosmos - is distinctly odd.

Here, as in v. 19, translating τὸ πᾶν as Kosmos, rather than 'All That Exists' to elucidate the meaning and avoid awkward phraseology.

respectful wordful offerings. Qv. Poemandres 31. The difficult to translate Greek term λογικὴν θυσίαν implies an offering, and one which is both respectful and conveyed by means of words but which words are of themselves insufficient, inadequate, with the term 'wordful' suggesting such insufficiency as well as doubling for λόγῳ in the previous line.

19.

I take λογικὴν θυσίαν (respectful wordful offerings) as the end of the named, the metaphysical, 'esoteric song' (υμνωδία κρύπτη) with what follows - lines 214-235, that is, until the interjection by Thoth - a personal evokation, a chant, to theos - τὸ πᾶν - for acceptance of the offering (the singing of the esoteric

song) followed by a personal request to remain enlightened, followed by an epiphonema which includes sentiments of personal gratitude.

Life, recure. σῷζε ζωή. Recure - from the classical Latin recuro - is an interesting, if neglected, English word and is apposite here implying as it does restore (to health), heal, and preserve. As mentioned in Poemandres 17 regarding Life and Phaos,

> ὁ δὲ Ἄνθρωπος ἐκ ζωῆς καὶ φωτὸς ἐγένετο εἰς ψυχὴν καὶ νοῦν, ἐκ μὲν ζωῆς ψυχήν, ἐκ δὲ φωτὸς νοῦν
>
> Of Life and Phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from Phaos - perceiveration

Theos, spiritus. πνεῦμα θεέ. In respect of πνεῦμα Nock considered it doubtful and noted the suggestion of Keil, πνευμάτιζε, although πνεῦμα θεέ - theos, pneuma (spiritus) - does seem appropriate: theos, 'a breath', a breathing, Pneuma; which breathing imbues beings with life and spirit, with pnuema.

Breath-Giver, Artisan. πνευματοφόρε δημιουργέ. Literally, "Pnuema-Bearing, Artisan." The Master Craftsman whose craft is to make - to construct, to create - living beings.

20.

Because of your desire. Qv. v. 4, θελήματι θεοῦ.

21.

I follow Festugiere and take τῷ σῷ τὴν εὐλογίαν ταύτην λεγομένην as belonging to Thoth, not Hermes.

a more numinal perceiveration. Regarding ἐπιφωτιζω, qv. v. 16, γνῶσις ἁγία, φωτισθεὶς ἀπὸ σοῦ and the comment on 'numinal understanding'. As there, what is meant is not some ordinary type of 'illumination' but rather a divinely-inspired or a divinely-given understanding. Here, this understanding has enhanced the perceiveration Thoth has acquired.

from my heart. As at v. 4, φρήν as a metaphor for the heart. Which explains the response of Hermes: μὴ ἀσκόπως.

essentiator. Qv. v. 4.

kyrios. A transliteration of the Greek, appropriate here given what terms such as 'Lord' and 'Master' now so often denote, and given Poemandres 6,

Οὕτω γνῶθι· τὸ ἐν σοὶ βλέπον καὶ ἀκοῦον, λόγος κυρίου, ὁ δὲ νοῦς πατὴρ θεός. οὐ γὰρ διίστανται ἀπ' ἀλλήλων· ἕνωσις γὰρ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ ζωή

Then know that within you - who hears and sees - is logos kyrios, although perceiveration is theos the father. They are not separated, one from the other, because their union is Life.

22.

invokation. εὔχομαι. Not 'pray' - which has too many Christian and other non-Hellenic religious connotations - but invokation, as in appeal to a deity, to call upon, to offer a laudation or an offering. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 933, ηὔξω θεοῖς δείσας ἂν ὧδ᾽ ἔρδειν τάδε, did you invoke the gods because you feared doing such things?

the unrottable produce. τὰ ἀθάνατα γενήματα. Literally, "the deathless/immortal produce". Taking ἀθάνατος metaphorically contrasts well with the preceding 'bearing good fruit'.

the tradition. In respect of παράδοσις, cf. παραδιδόναι μοι in v. 1. As there, the suggestion is of a disclosing of some ancestral teaching or wisdom; the disclosing by a teacher or master to a pupil.

rouners. For 'rouner' in respect of διάβολος, qv. v. 13, εἰς ὃν ὑπεμνηματι σάμην ἵνα μὴ ὦμεν διάβολοι τοῦ παντὸς εἰς τοὺς πολλούς.

noesis. A technical, mystical, term, qv. the comment on 'noetic sapientia' in v. 2.

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ΕΡΜΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΙΣΜΕΓ.

πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν Τὰτ ἐν ὄρει λόγος ἀπόκρυφος
περὶ παλιγγενεσίας, καὶ σιγῆς ἐπαγγελίας.

ΕΝ τοῖς γνωικοῖς ὦ πάτερ, αἰνιγματωδῶς, καὶ οὐ τηλαυγῶς ἔφρασας περὶ θεότητος ὀφθαλμόμυος· καὶ ὃν ἀπεκάλυψας, φάρμυος μηδένα δυνάσθαι σοφιῶσαι περὶ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας, ἐμοῦ τέ σου ἱκέτου γνομένου ὑπὲ τῆς τοῦ ὄρους μεταβάσεως, μὴ δόσει ἐμοὶ ἀφαλεχθῶσαι, καὶ πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν, ὅπη τοῦτον

A Note On The Term Noesis In Tractate XIII

Context

In many ways the last line of section 22 of tractate XIII of the Corpus Hermeticum - νοερῶς ἔγνως σεαυτὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἡμέτερον - expresses an important aspect of the Hellenistic hermetic tradition: that "through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father" which relates to section 2 of the tractate where the expression σοφία νοερὰ occurs.

However, this aspect has been somewhat neglected since νοερός has usually been and still is translated by English words which now imply and have implied for well over a century philosophical and latterly psychological denotata, abstractions, categories, which I consider are not relevant to the Hellenistic milieu.

In his 1882 translation Chambers used the word 'mind', "Mentally thou hast known thyself and The Father that is ours," [1] while the 1992 translation by Copenhaver was "You know yourself and our father intellectually." [2]

A neglected aspect, because and for instance 'intellectually' now implies 'cleverly', 'by means of certain types of abstractive reasoning or concepts or ideas' with an 'intellectual' perceived as a certain type of person.

My own translation, in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, [3] is "Through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father," using noesis, a transliteration, to suggest a hermetic, a metaphysical, principle which requires contextual interpretation since as I noted in my commentary, the terms νοῦς νοερός, νοῦς οὐσιώδης, and νοῦς ζωτικός are mentioned by Proclus, [4] with νοῦς there and in the Corpus Hermeticum not suggestive of the denotata 'mind', which now has also acquired philosophical and latterly psychological meanings, but of 'perceiveration' as in the Poemandres tractate:

> φημὶ ἐγώ, Σὺ γὰρ τίς εἶ; – Ἐγὼ μέν, φησίν, εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς· οἶδα ὃ βούλει, καὶ σύνειμί σοι πανταχοῦ.
>
> φημὶ ἐγώ, Μαθεῖν θέλω τὰ ὄντα καὶ νοῆσαι τὴν τούτων φύσιν καὶ γνῶναι τὸν θεόν· πῶς, ἔφην, ἀκοῦσαι βούλομαι. – φησὶν ἐμοὶ πάλιν, Ἔχε νῶι σῶι ὅσα θέλεις μαθεῖν, κἀγώ σε διδάξω.
>
> I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority, knowing your desires and eachwhere with you.
>
> I answered that I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings, and to have knowledge of theos. That is what I want to hear. [5]

In summation, noesis is a personal method, a praxis, by which particular knowledge, a particular understanding, can be obtained and in the context of tractate XIII this is of Palingenesis, παλιγγενεσία, acquired "in silence" and which emanation, of theos, "is not taught; rather, it is presenced by and when the theos desires," οὐ διδάσκεται, ἀλλ´ ὅταν θέλῃ, ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναμιμνήσκεται. [v.2]

As the student describes in v.11:

> With a quietude, father, engendered by theos, the seeing is not of the sight from the eyes but that through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air. I am in living beings, in plants; in the womb, before the womb, after the womb. Everywhere. [6]
>
> Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὦ πάτερ, φαν τάζομαι, οὐχ ὁράσει ὀφθαλμῶν ἀλλὰ τῇ διὰ δυνάμεων νοη τικῇ ἐνεργείᾳ. ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι· ἐν ζῴοις εἰμί, ἐν φυτοῖς· ἐν γαστρί, πρὸ γαστρός, μετὰ γασ τέρα, πανταχοῦ.

In regard to the word Cræft in the translation, this older spelling in an esoteric context implies (as often in this tractate) a particular *Arte*, the application of particular abilities, skills, and knowledge, especially abilities, skills, and knowledge learned or received in the traditional manner from a master of the Arte or Arts in question. In this esoteric sense, theos is the Master Craftsman, with Palingenesis being a Cræft, an Arte that "is not taught; rather, it is presenced by and when the theos desires". The word cræft also has the advantage of implying the plural, such as in the expression the Cræft(s) of theos.

As for Palingenesis, from the Latin palingenesia, English terms such as 'rebirth' or 'regeneration' do not describe what is meant in terms of the context of the Corpus Hermeeticum which is that mortals become *of* theos, not that they become theos or theoi. This may well explain the reading of the MSS in v.10, ἐθεωρήθημεν, amended by Nock (after Reitzenstein) to ἐθεώθημεν. For it is possible that the hermetic θέωσις implied, in practice, a contemplative type of life; a style of life hinted at in v. 2 - "noetic sapientia is in silence" - and in v. 7 when Hermes says to Thoth, "Go within: and an arriving. Intend: and an engendering. Let physical perceptibility rest, and divinity will be brought-into-being." Cf. Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ in v. 11.

Hence Palingenesis is not a Buddhist-type of rebirth or of being reborn to eternally live in some place such as Heaven, but an awareness that we are "in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air [...] in living beings, in plants; in the womb, before the womb, after the womb. Everywhere" and thus that our perception of ourselves as an individual different and distinct from others, human and otherwise, is but an illusion, preventing us understanding theos, our relation to theos, and thus our place in the Cosmos.

Which explains v.7, of the need to "refine yourself, away from the brutish Alastoras of Materies,"

> "My son, one Vengeress is Unknowing; the second, Grief. The third, Unrestraint; the fourth, Lascivity. The fifth, Unfairness; the sixth, Coveter. The seventh, Deceit; the eighth, Envy. The ninth, Treachery; the tenth, Wroth. The eleventh, Temerity; the twelfth, Putridity. In number, these are twelve but below them are numerous others who, my son, compel the inner mortal - bodily incarcerated - to suffer because of perceptibility. But they absent themselves - although not all at once - from those to whom theos is generous, which is what the Way and Logos of Palingenesis consists of." [7]
>
> Μία αὕτη, ὦ τέκνον, τιμωρία ἡ ἄγνοια· δευτέρα λύπη· τρίτη ἀκρασία· τετάρτη ἐπιθυμία· πέμπτη ἀδικία· ἕκτη πλεονεξία· ἑβδόμη ἀπάτη· ὀγδόη φθόνος· ἐνάτη δόλος· δεκάτη ὀργή· ἑνδεκάτη προπέτεια· δωδεκάτη κακία· εἰσὶ δὲ αὗται τὸν ἀριθμὸν δώδεκα· ὑπὸ δὲ ταύτας πλείονες ἄλλαι, ὦ τέκνον, διὰ τοῦ δεσμωτηρίου τοῦ σώματος αἰσθητικῶς πάσχειν ἀναγκάζουσι τὸν ἐνδιάθετον ἄνθρω πον· ἀφίστανται δὲ αὗται, οὐκ ἀθρόως, ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐλεηθέν τος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ οὕτω συνίσταται ὁ τῆς παλιγγενε σίας τρόπος καὶ λόγος.

This is similar to the ἄνοδος, the hermetic quest, of the Peomandres tractate, v.25, of the journey of the mortal through the seven spheres:

> καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾷ λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τετάρτῃ τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῇ πέμπτῃ τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῇ ἕκτῃ τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ ζώνῃ τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.
>
> "Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait." [7]

Theos, The Monas, Divinity, The One, And Patriarchy

The expression "through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father" - νοερῶς ἔγνως σεαυτὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἡμέτερον - is, in my view comparable to the phrase "quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora" of Marsilii Ficini from 1489 CE [8] which itself is a restatement of an expression from the Arabic text Lawh al-Zumurrud in *Sirr al-khalīqa* dating from several centuries earlier which I translated as "for the higher is as the lower with the lower as the higher." [9]

Both express important aspects of the esoteric nature of ancient hermeticism whose essence is perhaps expressed by

this section from Lawh al-Zumurrud:

> The signs were from The One
> As all beings are from The One
> Through one design:
> The father, the Sun,
> The mother, the Moon,
> The Pnuema, the womb
> The Earth, the nourishment. [9]

As described in tractate XI, v.11:

> It is evident someone is so creating and that he is One; for Psyche is one, Life is one, Substance is one. But who is it? Who could it be if not One, the theos? To whom if not to theos alone would it belong to presence life in living beings? Theos therefore is One...
>
> καὶ ὅτι μὲν ἔστι τις ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα δῆλον· ὅτι δὲ καὶ εἷς, φανερώτατον· καὶ γὰρ μία ψυχὴ καὶ μία ζωὴ καὶ μία ὕλη. τίς δὲ οὗτος; τίς δὲ ἂν ἄλλος εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός; τίνι γὰρ ἄλλωι ἂν καὶ πρέποι ζῶια ἔμψυχα ποιεῖν εἰ μὴ μόνωι τῶι θεῶι; εἷς οὖν θεός.

The One is almost certainly the μονάς, Monas, of tractate IV for in vv.10-11 of that tractate it is stated:

> This is the distinction between what is akin and what is different
> With what is different having a privation of what is akin.
> Since the Monas is the origin and foundation of everything
> It is within everything as origin and foundation
> For if there is no origin there is nothing
> And the origin is not from anything but itself
> Since it is the origin of everything else,
> Just as the Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos [10]
> Without itself being enfolded by any,
> Begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any.
>
> Everything that is begotten is unfinished, partible,
> Liable to decline, resurgence
> Which do not befall what is complete
> For what is resurgent is resurgence from Monas
> But what is brought low is so by its own malady
> Because unable to hold Monas.
>
> This, then, Thoth, is the eikon of the theos
> Insofar as it can be drawn:
> If you - clearly, carefully - and with the eyes of your heart apprehend it
> Then I assure you, my son, that you shall find the path to what is above:
> In truth, the eikon will guide you
> Since the seeing of it is uniquely your own,
> For those who attain such a beholding are attentively held, pulled up,
> Just as it is said lodestone does with iron.
>
> αὕτη διαφορὰ τοῦ ὁμοίου πρὸς τὸ ἀνόμοιον, καὶ τῶι ἀνομοίωι ὑστέρημα πρὸς τὸ ὅμοιον. ἡ γὰρ μονάς, οὖσα πάντων ἀρχὴ καὶ ῥίζα, ἐν πᾶσίν ἐστιν ὡς ἂν ῥίζα καὶ ἀρχή. ἄνευ δὲ ἀρχῆς οὐδὲν, ἀρχὴ δὲ ἐξ οὐδενὸς ἀλλ' ἐξ αὐτῆς, εἴ γε ἀρχή ἐστι τῶν ἑτέρων. μονὰς οὖσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἑτέρου ἀριθμοῦ.
>
> πᾶν δὲ τὸ γεννώμενον ἀτελὲς καὶ διαιρετόν, καὶ αὐξητὸν καὶ μειωτόν, τῶι δὲ τελείωι οὐδὲν τούτων γίνεται. καὶ τὸ μὲν αὐξητὸν αὐξάνεται ἀπὸ τῆς μονάδος, ἁλίσκεται δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀσθενείας, μηκέτι δυνάμενον τὴν μονάδα χωρῆσαι. αὕτη οὖν, ὦ Τάτ. κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν σοι ὑπογέγραπται τοῦ θεοῦ εἰκών· ἣν ἀκριβῶς εἰ θεάσηι καὶ νοήσεις τοῖς τῆς καρδίας ὀφθαλμοῖς, πίστευσόν μοι, τέκνον, εὑρήσεις τὴν πρὸς τὰ ἄνω ὁδόν. μᾶλλον δὲ αὐτή σε ἡ εἰκὼν ὁδηγήσει. ἔχει γάρ τι ἴδιον ἡ θέα· τοὺς φθάσαντας θεάσασθαι κατέχει καὶ ἀνέλκει, καθάπερ φασὶν ἡ μαγνῆτις λίθος τὸν σίδηρον.

Similarly, the Poemandres tractate states that "phaos and Life formed the father of all beings," [11] with the logical conclusion that the appellations Monas, The One, The Father, Theos, (θεὸς) and The Theos (ὁ θεὸς) are equivalent.

As for the Father, an appelation famiiar from Christianity, the Poemandres tractate, v.9, is quite explicit:

> Theos, the perceiveration, male-and-female [ἀρρενόθηλυς] being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiveration, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate.
>
> ὁ δὲ Νοῦς ὁ θεός, ἀρρενόθηλυς ὤν, ζωὴ καὶ φῶς ὑπάρχων, ἀπεκύησε λόγωι ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν, ὃς θεὸς τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ πνεύματος ὤν, ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτά, ἐν κύκλοις περιέχοντας τὸν

αἰσθητὸν κόσμον, καὶ ἡ διοίκησις αὐτῶν εἱμαρμένη καλεῖται.

This male-and-female theos therefore does not seem to be the patriarchal male God of the Old and New Testaments which has led to disputations regarding the meaning of ἀρρενόθηλυς, with for instance Copenhaver opting for 'androgyne', Chambers translating 'masculine-feminine' and Nock 'mâle-et-femelle', [12] with the common suggestion that it is an epithet for the unity of apparent opposites, metaphysically in a blending of two different philosophical ancient traditions one of which was Stoicism, the other deriving from Plato [13] and, as I am inclined to favour, alchemically as described and as illustrated in texts such as *De Alchimia Opuscula Complura Veterum Philosophorum* first published in 1550 CE.

ἀρρενόθηλυς

Another alternative is 'hermaphrodite' based on the myth of the child of the gods Hermes and Aphrodite, Hermaphroditus who was often associated with matters of a carnal kind, as for example in the myth of the nymph Salmacis.

Whatever the suggestions, there is as far as I know no corollary with the male god of patriarchal traditions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, for Poemandres goes on to explain in v.14:

> When she beheld such unceasing beauty - he who possessed all the vigour of the viziers and was the image of theos - she lovingly smiled, for it was as if in that Water she had seen the semblance of that mortal's beautiful image and, on Earth, his shadow. And as he himself beheld in that Water her image, so similar to his own, he desired her and wanted to be with her. Then, his want and his vigour realized, and he within that image devoid of logos, Physis grasped he whom she loved to entwine herself around him so that, as lovers, they were intimately joined together. [14]
>
> ὃν ἰδοῦσα ἀκόρεστον κάλλος πᾶσαν ἐνέργειαν ἐν ἑαυτῶι ἔχοντα τῶν διοικητόρων τήν τε μορφὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐμειδίασεν ἔρωτι, ὡς ἅτε τῆς καλλίστης μορφῆς τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου τὸ εἶδος ἐν τῶι ὕδατι ἰδοῦσα καὶ τὸ σκίασμα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. ὁ δὲ ἰδὼν τὴν ὁμοίαν αὐτῶι μορφὴν ἐν αὐτῆι οὖσαν ἐν τῶι ὕδατι, ἐφίλησε καὶ ἠβουλήθη αὐτοῦ οἰκεῖν· ἅμα δὲ τῆι βουλῆι ἐγένετο ἐνέργεια, καὶ ὥικησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν· ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν· ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν.

The personified Physis (φύσις) gives birth to "seven male-and-female mortals" (v.16) who become the seven viziers who surround the perceptible cosmic order in seven spheres. (v. 9)

Hence why I incline toward the view that Theos, (θεὸς) and The Theos (ὁ θεὸς) and The Father of several of the tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum are not equivalent to the God of the Christian tradition and that to render ὁ θεὸς and θεὸς of such tractates by the term God is a mistake. Hence my somewhat iconoclastic view that the hermeticism of the eight tractates I have translated and commented on [3] are not only far more redolent of Greco-Roman pagan mysticism than they are of early Christianity but also that they, contrary to the modern majority view, may well have influenced early Christianity.

Thus noesis, a personal method, a praxis, by which particular knowledge, a particular understanding, can be obtained, is of and presences that Greco-Roman pagan mysticism and the alchemical tradition that derived from it and which tradition was so well expressed in Lawh al-Zumurrud. [9]

David Myatt
March 2024 CE

[1] John Chambers, *Hermes Trismegistus*, T&T Clark, 1882.

[2] Brian Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, Cambridge University Press, 1992

[3] David Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, 2017. (i) Printed edition: ISBN 978-1976452369 (ii) Gratis pdf: https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

The Appendix below contains the relevant extract from my *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*.

[4] *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentari*, Volume 5, Book 4, 245-247; *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, II 733 and IV 887.

[5]

perceiveration. νοῦς. The conventional interpretation here is 'mind', as if in contrast to 'the body' and/or as if some fixed philosophical and abstract principle is meant or implied.

This conventional interpretation is in my view incorrect, being another example of not only retrospective reinterpretation but of using a word which has acquired, over the past thousand years or more, certain meanings which detract from an understanding of the original text. Retrospective reinterpretation because the assumption is that what is being described is an axiomatic, reasoned, philosophy centred on ideations such as Thought, Mind, and Logos, rather than what it is: an attempt to describe, in fallible words, a personal intuition about our existence, our human nature, and which intuition is said to emanate from a supernatural being named Pœmandres.

In addition, one should ask what does a translation such as 'I am Poimandres, mind of sovereignty' [*vide* Copenhaver] actually mean? That there is a disembodied 'mind' which calls itself Pœmandres? That this disembodied 'mind' is also some gargantuan supernatural shapeshifting being possessed of the faculty of human speech? That some-thing called 'sovereignty' has a mind?

I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.

Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action. Hence why, in the Oedipus Tyrannus, Sophocles has Creon voice his understanding of the incipient hubris of Oedipus, of his pride without a purpose, of his apparent inability to understand, to correctly perceive, the situation:

> εἴ τοι νομίζεις κτῆμα τὴν αὐθαδίαν
> εἶναί τι τοῦ νοῦ χωρίς, οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονεῖς.
>
> If you believe that what is valuable is pride, by itself,
> Without a purpose, then your judgement is not right.
>
> vv. 549-550

Translating νοῦς as perceiverance/perceiveration thus places it into the correct context, given αὐθεντίας - authority. For "I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority" implies "What [knowledge] I reveal (or am about to reveal) is authentic," so that an alternative translation, in keeping with the hermeticism of the text, would be "I am Pœmandres, the authentic perceiveration." [The English word authentic means 'of authority, authoritative' and is derived, via Latin, from the Greek *αὐθεντία*]

eachwhere. An unusual but expressive (c.15th century) English word, suited to such an esoteric text. The meaning here is that, like a guardian δαίμων of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is always close by: eachwhere with you.

[6]

quietude engendered by theos. Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ. With ἀκλινής understood metaphorically, cf. σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ in v. 2.

the seeing is not of... In respect of φαντάζομαι, cf. XI:18, κεῖται γὰρ ἄλλως ἐν ἀσωμάτωι φαντασίαι.

through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. τῇ διὰ δυνάμεων νοητικῇ ἐνεργείᾳ. In respect of 'cræft', cf. ἀνακαθαιρόμενος ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεσιν in v. 8. In regard to noetic, qv. the comment on σοφία νοερὰ in v. 2. In respect of actuosity, qv. the comment on ἐνέργεια in v. 6.

The metaphysical content of this statement, important both in respect of what immediately follows - which bears comparison with XI:18-19 (see below) - and in respect of understanding Palingenesis, has been somewhat lost in previous translations such as "with the mental energy that comes through the powers" and "with the energy the Mind gives me through the powers."

What is meant is that there is a specific type of apprehension which is vivifying, which does not depend on what is seen directly by the eyes, and which is a cræft, a capability, an ability, an influencing, arising from the generosity of theos and from that quietude engendered by theos. Thoth then goes on to describe what this apprehension involves: ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...

I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water... Everywhere. ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...πανταχοῦ. Regarding this, and the aforementioned type of apprehension, cf. tractate XI:18-19,

> ἕνια δὲ τῶν λεγομένων ἰδίαν ἔννοιαν ἔχειν ὀφείλει· οἷον ὃ λέγω νόησον. πάντα ἐστὶν ἐν τῶι θεῶι. οὐχ ὡς ἐν τόπωι κείμενα (ὁ μὲν γὰρ τόπος καὶ σῶμά ἐστι, καὶ σῶμα ἀκίνητον, καὶ τὰ κείμενα κίνησιν οὐκ ἔχει)· κεῖται γὰρ ἄλλως ἐν ἀσωμάτωι φαντασίαι. νόησον τὸν περιέχοντα τὰ πάντα καὶ νόησον ὅτι τοῦ ἀσωμάτου οὐδέν ἐστι περιοριστικόν, οὐδὲ ταχύτερον, οὐδὲ δυνατώτερον· αὐτὸ δὲ πάντων καὶ ἀπεριόριστον καὶ ταχύτατον καὶ δυνατώτατον.
>
> καὶ οὕτω νόησον ἀπὸ σεαυτοῦ, καὶ κέλευσόν σου τῆι ψυχῆι εἰς Ἰνδικὴν πορευθῆναι, καὶ ταχύτερόν σου τῆς κελεύσεως ἐκεῖ ἔσται. μετελθεῖν δὲ αὐτῆι κέλευσον ἐπὶ τὸν ὠκεανόν, καὶ οὕτως ἐκεῖ πάλιν ταχέως ἔσται, οὐχ ὡς μεταβᾶσα ἀπὸ τόπου εἰς τόπον, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐκεῖ οὖσα. κέλευσον δὲ αὐτῆι καὶ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναπτῆναι, καὶ οὐδὲ πτερῶν δεηθήσεται. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ αὐτῆι οὐδὲν ἐμπόδιον, οὐ τοῦ ἡλίου πῦρ, οὐχ ὁ αἰθήρ, οὐχ ἡ δίνη, οὐχὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων σώματα· πάντα δὲ διατεμοῦσα ἀναπτήσεται μέχρι τοῦ ἐσχάτου σώματος. εἰ δὲ βουληθείης καὶ αὐτὸ ὅλον διαρρήξασθαι καὶ τὰ ἐκτός εἴ γέ τι ἐκτὸς τοῦ κόσμου θεάσασθαι, ἔξεστί σοι.
>
> Some of the matters spoken of require a certain apprehension, so consider what I say: everything is in the theos but not as if lying in a particular place - since the place is a body and also immovable and what is lain does not move - but an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise.
>
> Thus apprehend what embraces everything and apprehend that the incorporeal has no boundary, that nothing is swifter, nothing as mighty, since the incorporeal is boundless, the swiftest, the mightiest.
>
> And apprehend this about yourself and so urge your psyche to go to any land and, swifter than that urging, it will be there. Likewise, urge it to go to the Ocean and again it will be swiftly there without passing from place to place but as if already there.
>
> Urge it to go up into the heavens and it will be there without the need of any wings. Indeed, nothing will impede it: not the fire of the Sun nor Aether, nor the vortex, nor the bodies of the other stars, but - carving through them all - it will go as far as the furthest body. Should you desire to burst through The Entirety and observe what is beyond - if indeed there be anything beyond that ordered system - then it is possible for you.

[7]

brutish. Given the metaphysical context, and the contrast with καθαρός, ἄλογος implies more than 'irrational' or 'unreasonable'. The sense is of the unrefined, the uncultured, the brutish.

alastoras. Since the Greek word τιμωρία is specific and personal, implying vengeance, retribution, and also a divine punishment, it seems apposite to try and keep, in English, the personal sense even though no specific deeds or deeds are mentioned in the text, but especially because of what follows: Τιμωροὺς γὰρ ἐν ἐμαυτῷ ἔχω, ὦ πάτερ. Hence my interpretation, "the brutish alastoras of Materies," using the English term alastoras - singular, *alastor*, from the Greek ἀλάστωρ, an avenging deity, and also a person who avenges certain deeds. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 1497-1508.

materies. ὕλη. A variant form of the Latin *materia*, thus avoiding the English word 'matter' which now has connotations, derived from sciences such as Physics, that are not or may not be relevant here. In addition, the term requires contextual, metaphysical, interpretation, for as used here it may or may not be equivalent to the ὕλη of Poemandres 10, of III:1, και τα λοιπά. Hence why I have here chosen 'materies' rather than - as in those other tractates - 'substance'.

[8] *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, Book III, Chapter XXVI.

[9] Myatt, *Lawh al-Zumurrud*, 2024, https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2024/02/dwm-lawh-al-zumurrud.pdf

[10] In regard to "enfolds every arithmos [...] begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any".

This passage, with its mention of ἀριθμός, is often assumed to refer to the Pythagorean doctrine regarding numbers since ἀριθμός is invariably translated as 'number' - thus implying what the English word implies, especially in mathematical terms - even though Aristotle, in discussing ἀριθμός, wrote: ἄλλος δέ τις τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τὸν τῶν εἰδῶν ἕνα εἶναι, ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον εἶνα (Metaphysics, Book XIII, 1080b.20).

Given such a necessary distinction - and the discussion regarding ἀριθμός and Pythagoras in Book XIII, 1083b.10 et seq - as well as the fact that what ἀριθμός means here, in this tractate, and what it implies - such as the mathematical numbers 2 and 3 developing from the One - is not mentioned, I have transliterated ἀριθμός thus leaving open what it may or may not mean in relation to the particular weltanschauung being described. However, the context seems to suggest a metaphysical rather than an abstract mathematical notion, especially given what follows at the beginning of section 11: πᾶν δὲ τὸ γεννώμενον ἀτελὲς καὶ διαιρετόν.

[11]

> Yet why, according to the logos of theos, does the one of self-discovery progress within themselves?
>
> To which I replied, phaos and Life formed the father of all beings, from whence that human came into being.
>
> You express yourself well. For phaos and Life are the theos and the father from whence the human came into being. Therefore if you learn to be of Life and phaos - and that you perchance are of them - then you progress to return to Life. Thus spoke Pœmandres.
>
> Can you - who are my perceiveration - therefore tell me how I may progress to Life? For does not theos say that the human of perceiveration should have self-knowledge?
>
> κατὰ τί δὲ «ὁ νοήσας ἑαυτὸν εἰς αὐτὸν χωρεῖ», ὅπερ ἔχει ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος; – φημὶ ἐγώ, Ὅτι ἐκ φωτὸς καὶ ζωῆς συνέστηκεν ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, ἐξ οὗ γέγονεν ὁ Ἄνθρωπος. – Εὖ φὴις λαλῶν· φῶς καὶ ζωή ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ ἐγένετο ὁ Ἄνθρωπος. ἐὰν οὖν μάθηις αὐτὸν ἐκ ζωῆς καὶ φωτὸς ὄντα καὶ ὅτι ἐκ τούτων τυγχάνεις, εἰς ζωὴν πάλιν χωρήσεις. ταῦτα ὁ Ποιμάνδρης εἶπεν – Ἀλλ' ἔτι μοι εἰπέ, πῶς εἰς ζωὴν χωρήσω ἐγώ, ἔφην, ὦ Νοῦς ἐμός; φησὶ γὰρ ὁ θεός· «ὁ ἔννους ἄνθρωπος ἀναγνωρισάτω ἑαυτόν».

[12] A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Third Edition, 1972

[13] The problem here with such metaphysical explanations is that they assume there were specific supra-personal traditions or schools of thought distinctive enough to be taught and transmitted and later described by a term such as Stoicism, just as it has been assumed the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum represented a hermetic tradition whereas I am inclined toward the view that many if not most of the tractates present the personal weltanschauung of their authors germane to their time. That is, that rather than being representative of some axiomatical pre-existing philosophy or of some school of thought, they reproduce the insight and the understanding of individuals regarding particular metaphysical matters; an insight and an understanding no doubt somewhat redolent of, and possibly influenced by, and sometimes perhaps paraphrasing, some such existing philosophies and/or some such schools of thought; and an insight which often differs from tractate to tractate.

[14]

Physis grasped [...] intimately joined together. ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν. The sense of μίγνυμι here is that of a physical union, a sexual joining together - not of some 'philosophical mingling' of 'forms'. Similarly, περιπλέκω is not some ordinary 'embrace' but a sexual twinning (of limbs). Cf. Hesiod, Theogony, 375 - Κρίῳ δ᾽ Εὐρυβίν τέκεν ἐν φιλότητι μιγεῖσα Ἀστραῖόν.

Appendix

Section 22 Of Tractate XIII

Text

Εὐχαριστῶ σοι, πάτερ, ταῦτά μοι αἰνεῖν εὐξαμένῳ.

Χαίρω, τέκνον, καρποφορήσαντος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας τὰ ἀγαθά, τὰ ἀθάνατα γενήματα. τοῦτο μαθὼν παρ´ ἐμοῦ τῆς ἀρετῆς σιγὴν ἐπάγγειλαι, μηδενί, τέκνον, ἐκφαί νων τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τὴν παράδοσιν, ἵνα μὴ ὡς διάβολοι λογισθῶμεν. ἱκανῶς γὰρ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἐπεμελήθη, ἐγώ τε ὁ λέγων, σύ τε ὁ ἀκούων. οερῶς ἔγνως σεαυτὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἡμέτερον.

Translation

My thanks to you, father, for your advice regarding the invokation.

My son, I am glad that the actuality has borne good fruit, the unrottable produce. Having learned of this from me, profess silence my son about this wonder, revealing to no one the tradition of the Palingenesis, for otherwise we will be regarded as rouners. Each of us has had a sufficiency of interest: I in speaking, you in listening. Through noesis you

have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father.

Commentary

invokation. εὔχομαι. Not 'pray' - which has too many Christian and other non-Hellenic religious connotations - but invokation, as in appeal to a deity, to call upon, to offer a laudation or an offering. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 933, ηὔξω θεοῖς δείσας ἂν ὧδ᾽ ἔρδειν τάδε, did you invoke the gods because you feared doing such things?

the unrottable produce. τὰ ἀθάνατα γενήματα. Literally, "the deathless/immortal produce". Taking ἀθάνατος metaphorically contrasts well
with the preceding 'bearing good fruit'. the tradition. In respect of παράδοσις, cf. παραδιδόναι μοι in v. 1. As there, the suggestion is of a disclosing of some ancestral teaching or wisdom; the disclosing by a teacher or master to a pupil.

rouners. For 'rouner' in respect of διάβολος, qv. v. 13, εἰς ὃν ὑπεμνηματι σάμην ἵνα μὴ ὦμεν διάβολοι τοῦ παντὸς εἰς τοὺς πολλούς.

> <quote>
>
> *rouner.* διάβολος. In regard to the Old English word *rouner* - denoting a person who whispers secrets or who spreads rumours in a secretive, disruptive, manner - qv. the Prologue of the 14th century *Cloud Of Unknowing*: Fleschely janglers, opyn preisers and blamers of hemself or of any other, tithing tellers, rouners and tutilers of tales.
>
> Also, cf. 2 Timothy 3:3, ἄστοργοι, ἄσπονδοι, διάβολοι, ἀκρατεῖς (unloving, unforgiving, rouners, unrestrained) where mention is made of ἀκρατής, which in this tractate is personified as one of the Alastoras.
>
> I take the following τοῦ παντὸς as referring to keeping the silence - the secrets - as mentioned in v. 22, rather than as referring to the preceding τὸ πᾶν.
>
> </quote>

noesis. A technical, mystical, term, qv. the comment on 'noetic sapientia' in v. 2:

> <quote>
>
> *noetic sapientia*. For a variety of reasons, I have used the term *noetic sapientia* to denote σοφία νοερὰ.
>
> i) The metaphysical terms νοῦς νοερός, νοῦς οὐσιώδης, and νοῦς ζωτικός occur in Proclus, qv. *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentari*, Volume 5, Book 4, 245-247; *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, II 733 and IV 887. Interestingly, Proclus associates νοερός with the three 'septenary planets' Mercury, Venus, and the Sun.
>
> Here, σοφία νοερὰ may well suggest a particular hermetic principle which requires contextual interpretation.
>
> ii) As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 29 - where I used the Latin *sapientia* in respect of σοφία - in some contexts the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context given what the English term 'wisdom' now, in common usage and otherwise, often denotes. As in the Poemandres tractate *sapientia* (for σοφία) requires contextual - a philosophical - interpretation, as Sophia (for σοφία) does in tractate XI where it is there suggestive, as with Aion, Kronos, and Kosmos, of a personified metaphysical principle.
>
> iii) In respect of νοερός, the English word 'intellectual' has too many irrelevant modern connotations, with phrases such as 'intellectual wisdom' and 'the wisdom that understands' - for σοφία νοερὰ - unhelpful regarding suggesting a relevant philosophical meaning. Hence the use of the term 'noetic' which suggests a particular type of apprehension - a perceiveration - whereby certain knowledge and a particular understanding can be ascertained.
>
> Thus, *noetic sapientia* implies that the knowledge and understanding that is noetically acquired transcends - or at least is different from - that acquired both (a) through observation of and deductions concerning phenomena and (b) through the use of denotatum whereby beings are given 'names' and assigned to abstractive categories with such naming and such categories assumed to provide knowledge and understanding of the physis of those beings. [In respect of physis, qv. the comment on φύσεως μιᾶς in section 12.]
>
> In addition, given what follows - ἐν σιγῇ, 'in silence' - such knowledge and understanding does not require nor depend upon words whether they be spoken or written or thought. Hence, the 'source' of mortals is in, can be known and understood through, the silence of noetic sapientia.
>
> </quote>

All translations by DW Myatt

Image credit:
The beginning of tractate XIII from the book Mercvrii Trismegisti Pœmandres, published in Paris in 1554

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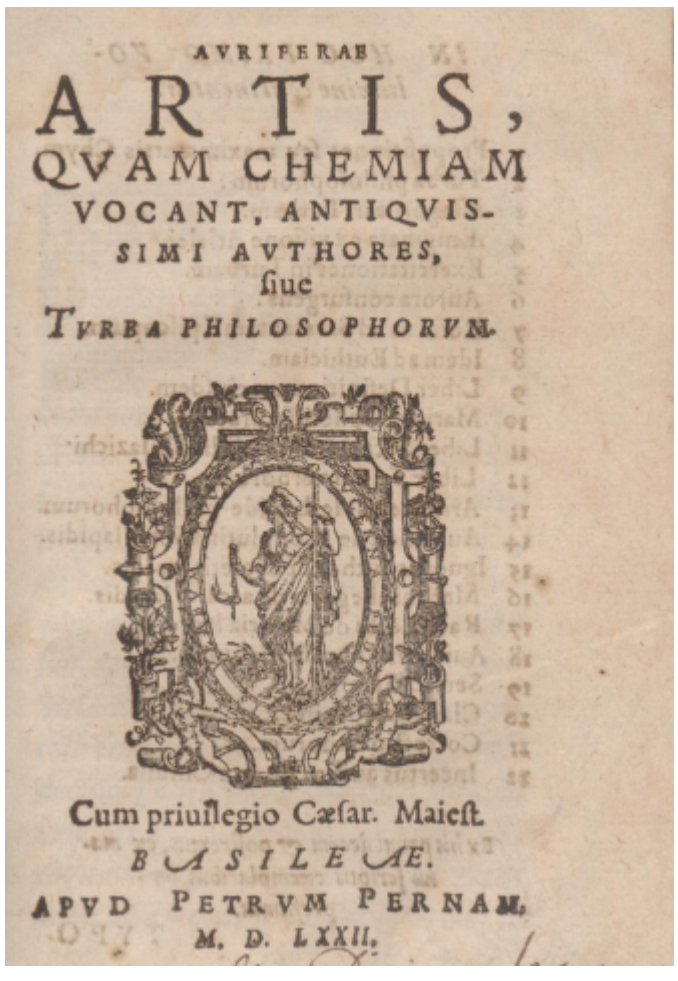
Anaximander, Imbalance, And Opposites

Three quotations attributed to the Greek philosopher Anaximander (c. 610 – c. 546 BCE) one quotation in Greek and two in Latin, have been much debated over the centuries with all three suggesting an ancient weltanschauung which resonated with later weltanschauungen such as hermeticism and alchemy, which is possibly why the two Latin quotations were included in a 1572 CE compendium on alchemy in the section titled *Turba Philosophorum* itself a Latin translation of an earlier Arabic text by Muḥammad ibn Umayl al-Tamimi (c.900–960 CE).


AVRIFERAE
ARTIS,
QVAM CHEMIAM
VOCANT, ANTIQVIS-
SIMI AVTHORES,
siue
TVRBA PHILOSOPHORVM.
Cum priuilegio Cæsar. Maiest.
BASILEAE.
APVD PETRVM PERNAM.
M. D. LXXII.

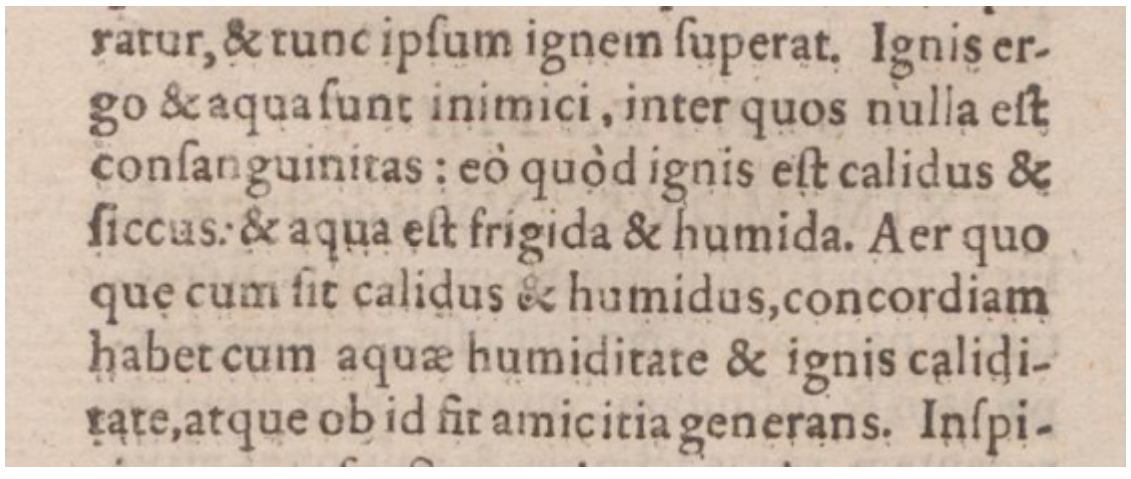
My methodology in interpreting these quotations derives from my understanding that certain Latin and Greek words as originally used by their authors represent philosophical, or hermetic or alchemical, principles or substances or what we now term 'archetypes', and that it is therefore erroneous to translate them by English words which over centuries may and often have acquired ordinary meanings, such as air', 'water', 'fire'.

The question of such principles is, as Aristotle wrote in his Metaphysics, (3.996a) an interesting and complex question answered by many in certain ways with others proposing as first principles Fire, Water, and Air - ἄλλος δέ τις πῦρ ὁ δὲ ὕδωρ ἢ ἀέρα - which leads him to the question of whether or not such principles are universal or individual.

The Latin Texts

The Latin of the first quotation in Turba Philosophorum is:

> ignis ergo et aqua sunt inimici, inter quos nulla est consanguinitas, eo quod ignis est calidus et siccus, aqua vero frigida et humida


ratur, & tunc ipſum ignem ſuperat. Ignis er-
go & aqua ſunt inimici, inter quos nulla eſt
conſanguinitas: eò quòd ignis eſt calidus &
ſiccus: & aqua eſt frigida & humida. Aer quo
que cum ſit calidus & humidus, concordiam
habet cum aquæ humiditate & ignis calidi-
tate, atque ob id fit amicitia generans. Inſpi-

Auriferae artis, quam chemiam vocant, antiquissimi authores, sive turba philosophorum
Basileae, 1572

My interpretation of meaning:

> Ignis [1] and Acua [2] are not friendly for there are no ties of kindred among them: Ignis is fiery and resolute while Acua is cool and moistening. [3]

1. Retaining the Latin rather than simply translating here as 'fire' because Ignis (πυρὸς) is a philosophical, hermetic and alchemical, principle (or substance or archetype) as in the Corpus Hermeticum. For example:

> σὺ εἶ ὁ θεός. ὁ σὸς ἄνθρωπος ταῦτα βοᾷ διὰ πυρός, δι΄ ἀέρος, διὰ γῆς, διὰ ὕδατος, διὰ πνεύματος, διὰ τῶν κτισμάτων σου
>
> You are theos. Your mortal loudly calls out: through Ignis [Fire, πυρός], through Air, through Earth, through Water, through Pneuma, through your created beings.
>
> > Logos Δ. The Esoteric Song, Tractate XIII, 20. Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum*, 2017. ISBN 9781976452369

Compare also a fragment attributed to Heraclitus:

> ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα συνεστάναι εἰς τοῦτο ἀναλύεσθαι πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα καὶ πάντα ψυχῶν εἶναι καὶ δαιμόνων πλήρη [Diogenes Laertius, 11:7]
>
> The foundation/base/essence of all beings ['things'] is pyros to which they return, with all [of them] by genesis appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] to be bound together again by enantiodromia, and all filed/suffused/vivified with/by ψυχή and Dæmons.

2. Acua. I have opted for a somewhat obscure regional (Sardinian) variant of aqua rather than simply retaining the Latin or translating as 'water' because aqua is now a somewhat commercialized word with the Greek ὕδωρ, like Pyros, a hermetic and alchemical principle, qv. Corpus Hermeticum, Tractate IV, 1:

> τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἄλλωι τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον· οὔτε γὰρ πῦρ ἐστιν οὔτε ὕδωρ οὔτε ἀὴρ οὔτε πνεῦμα, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. ἀγαθὸς γὰρ ὢν, μόνωι ἑαυτῶι τοῦτο ἀναθεῖναι ἠθέλησε καὶ τὴν γῆν κοσμῆσαι,
>
> That Being has no body that can be touched or seen or measured or which is separable or which is similar to any other body: not of Fire [pyros] or Water [ὕδωρ] or of Pneuma even though all such things are from that Being. (Myatt, op.cit.)

3. (i) qv. "moistness and consistency" in the second quotation, below. (ii) cf. William Caxton: "one somer is softe and moyste, and another is drye and wyndy." Myrrour of the Worlde, 1481 CE.

°°°

The Latin of the second quotation in Turba Philosophorum is:

> doceo autem vos stellas esse igneas et aera ipsas continere et quod si aeris humiditas et spissitudo non esset, quae solis flammam separaret a creaturis, omnia subsistentia sol combureret.

The Arabic of Muḥammad ibn Umayl al-Tamimi (c.900–960 CE) from *Kitab al-ma 'al-waraqi* containing the quotation is:

قال أكسميدوس الجرعاني [. . .] فالماء والنار عدوان ليست
بينهما قرابة واشجة لأن النار حارّة يابسة والماء بارد رطب
فأمّا الهواء فحارّ رطب فأصلح ما بينهما برطوبته مع حرارته
فصار الهواء مصلحا بين الماء والنار. والأرواح كلهم من لطيف
بخار الهواء تكون لأنه إذا اجتمعت السخونة مع الرطوبة فليس
لهما بد من أن يخرج من بينهما لطيف يصير بخارا أو ريحا لأن
حرارة الشمس تُخرج

My interpretation of meaning:

> I inform you that stars are Igneous, that Aeros [1] bounds them, and it is the moistness and consistency [2] of Aeros which keeps the flames of the Sun separate from created beings for otherwise the Sun would consume them.

1. Aeros. Here as in hermeticism and alchemy, ἀὴρ is a particular philosophical principle, substance, or archetype. As in Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, for example v.5:

καὶ ὁ ἀὴρ ἐλαφρὸς ὢν ἠκολούθησε τῶι πνεύματι, ἀναβαίνοντος αὐτοῦ μέχρι τοῦ πυρὸς ἀπὸ γῆς καὶ ὕδατος, ὡς δοκεῖν κρέμασθαι αὐτὸν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ

Since Air [ἀέρος, Aeros] is agile, it followed the pnuema, up and above Earth and Water [Acua] and as far as Fire [Pyros], to be as if it were hanging from that, there.

2. spissitudo from spissus, qv. σπιδής and cf. πυκνός. Here 'consistency' rather than 'broad' or 'dense'.

The Greek Text

ἀρχὴ <...> τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον <...>

ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσίς ἐστι τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν [Theophrastus/Simplicius]

My interpretation of meaning:

< [the] source ... of beings is the un-definitive [1] ...>

Where beings have their origin there also they cease to exist: offering payment [2] to balance, [3] one to another, their unbalance for such is the arrangement of what is passing. [4]

1. Because the beginning is fragmentary it is difficult to provide a satisfactory explanation of what is meant, although many explanations have been suggested over many centuries including the speculation that 'apeiron' is the first principle, the ἀρχὴ, of beings, with ἄπειρον almost invariably translated by words such as the boundless, infinity, the limit-less.

However, ἄπειρον is a privation of πεῖραρ, a lack of completion; a lack of a verdict; or, often overlooked, a lack of a means, a method, an instrument, to reach a particular conclusion or of a tool do a particular task, qv. Odyssey: 3.431-435, and my translation:

ὣς ἔφαθ᾽, οἱ δ᾽ ἄρα πάντες ἐποίπνυον. ἦλθε μὲν ἂρ βοῦς
ἐκ πεδίου, ἦλθον δὲ θοῆς παρὰ νηὸς ἐίσης
Τηλεμάχου ἕταροι μεγαλήτορος, ἦλθε δὲ χαλκεὺς
ὅπλ᾽ ἐν χερσὶν ἔχων χαλκήια, πείρατα τέχνης,
ἄκμονά τε σφῦραν τ᾽ ἐυποίητόν τε πυράγρην,
οἵσίν τε χρυσὸν εἰργάξετο

Such were his words, and all of his sons occupied themselves with those things
So that an ox arrived from the fields; the comrades of the vigourous Telemachus
Arrived from their well-balanced ship; the goldsmith arrived bearing in his arms
Those bronze tools with which he accomplished his art:
A hammer, anvil and well-made fire-tongs
Which he used to work gold.

Hence my suggestion here that what Anaximander might have implied is that the source of beings is 'un-definitive', incapable of resolution because we do not posses the tools, such as words, to resolve it. Which explains why he goes on to contrast δίκη with ἀδικία, which balance and unbalance I explain below.

2. Payment as in a debt owed or because of some personal need or mistake, as in our relatively recent phrase 'debt of honour'. The debt may be to a person or persons or as in ancient times to a deity either in expiation or in the hope of avoiding a misfortune wrought by some deity, for example by the "Trimorphed Moirai with their ever-heedful Furies" of the gods, Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ᾽ Ἐρινύες.

The suggestion therefore might be that the offer of payment relates to those who, despite the fact that source of beings is 'un-definitive', having tried to define it and in the process constructed a dialectic of opposites, and thus brought conflict, realize their error. As Heraclitus noted:

εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ΄ ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα [χρεών]

One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord δίκη, and that beings are naturally born by discord.

3. In respect of δίκη it here simply implies balance in contrast to the unbalance, the privation of balance, that is ἀδικία. The translations 'order' or justice or 'fitting' - like 'disorder' or injustice or 'unfitting' for ἀδικία - are too redolent of some modern or ancient morality designed to manifest 'order' or justice or what is considered fitting in contrast to their assumed dialectical opposites.

4. In respect of χρόνος, it is not here a modern abstract measurable 'time' (in ancient times by a sundial; in later times by a mechanical clock) but 'the passing' of living or of events as evident in the Agamemnon:

ποίου χρόνου δὲ καὶ πεπόρθηται πόλις 278

Then - how long has it been since the citadel was ravaged?

τίς δὲ πλὴν θεῶν ἅπαντ᾽ ἀπήμων τὸν δι᾽ αἰῶνος χρόνον 554-5

Who - except for the gods - passes their entire life without any injury at all?

Imbalance And Opposites

What I find in these fragments attributed to Anaximander is germane to our perception of our human physis and of how we have tried to understand it through words - denotata - and thus by certain named 'principles', and that ultimately we have to accept that we cannot, should not, attempt to understand it through words which bring-into-being a named opposite and thus a conflict between those perceived, believed in, and conflicting dialectical opposites with their attendant strife, discord, enmity, hatred, and suffering. That such a wordful perception is un-definitive because the tools we have hitherto manufactured and rely on are useless.

Thus, my own fallible answer to Aristotle's question of whether or not such principles are universal or individual is that they are ineluctably personal, with all we can presently hope do is use the wordless knowing of our empathy, and of our own pathei-mathos, as a guide.

David Myatt

21st February 2024

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Lawh al-Zumurrud

Prefatory Note

An interpretation of meaning of the Arabic text Lawh al-Zumurrud from Sirr al-khaliqa, dating from between the eighth and ninth century CE. [1] The text is also known by its Latin title Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis and by the English title The Emerald Tablet.

I have added some footnotes to explain unusual words in my interpretation, with an Appendix providing the Latin text from the *Secretum Secretorum* as given in a critical edition, published by Oxford University Press in 1920, of a thirteenth century manuscript in the Bodleian Library. Which text, for some reason, does not mention telesmi, although an alternative sixteenth century Latin text, translated by Isaac Newton, does. [2]

Much has been written about the 'emerald tablet' which is considered to be one of the primary texts of hermetic philosophy and of alchemy. For this second edition I have extended my footnotes, included as Appendix II an updated version of my 2017 essay *Talismata In The Picatrix*, and corrected a few typos.

David Myatt
January 30th, 2024
Revised February 2024

1. Ursula Weisser, *Buch über das Geheimnis der Schöpfung und die Darstellung der Natur (Buch der Ursachen) von Pseudo-Apollonios von Tyana*. Sources and Studies in the History of Arabic-Islamic Science. Aleppo, 1979.

2. The Latin is "Pater omnis telesmi totius mundi est hic". Newton's manuscript is Keynes MS 28.

Veritas is veritas [1]
For the higher is as the lower
With the lower as the higher.

The signs [2] were from The One
As all beings are from The One
Through one design:
The father, the Sun,
The mother, the Moon,
The Pnuema, [3] the womb
The Earth, the nourishment.

Telismata: [4] of the father
Guardian of balanced signs.
Pyros, [5] the Earth
Separating the harsh from the gentle.
With the gentle, [6] noble,
Ascending from Earth to Empyrean [7]
Descending from Empyrean to Earth
Influencing the higher, the lower,
The gentle, the harsh:
The illumination of the illuminated.

Thus, it is for this the Magnum Opus [7] came-into-being
For I am Hermes Trismegistus of The Wisdom.

Notes

1. Veritas. I have used the Latin *veritas* rather than the English word 'truth'. As noted in my commentary on v.14 of chapter One of the Gospel of John,

> I have chosen the Latin veritas in order to avoid the disputations - philosophical and otherwise - and the assumptions that the English word 'truth' so often now imputes and engenders, with the reader (or the listener) thus having to reflect on what veritas might, in this context, signify. In addition, ἀληθείας here suggests not some abstract, impersonal, 'truth' but rather truthfulness, sincerity, integrity: the type of person that Jesus of Nazareth is. In respect of 'veritas' suggesting such truthfulness and sincerity, qv. the entry for veritas in Lexicon Totius Latinitatis, volume 4b.

https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/myatt-gospel-john-1-5.pdf

2. Signs. cf. σημεῖᾰ in relation to God, qv. The Gospel of John, and the Signs of Allah as mentioned in the Quran. It is notable that the Gospel of John has σημεῖον and not δῦνάμεις as in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, For example, in John 3:2, οὐδεὶς γὰρ δύναται ταῦτα τὰ σημεῖα ποιεῖν ἃ σὺ ποιεῖς, ἐὰν μὴ ᾖ ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτοῦ, "for no one is able to do the signs you do unless Theos is with them."

Since *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis* was a translation of an Arabic text, σημεῖᾰ here instead of δῦνάμεις or *miraculum* seems apposite.

3. The Pneuma. The Wind as archetype, as a hermetic principle, cf. tractate III of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἀπάντων καὶ ἀκατασκευάστων, ἀποδιωρίσθη τὰ ἐλαφρὰ εἰς ὕψος καὶ τὰ βαρέα ἐθεμελιώθη ἐφ' ὑγρᾶι ἄμμωι, πυρὶ τῶν ὅλων διορισθέντων καὶ ἀνακρεμασθέντων πνεύματι ὀχεῖσθαι· καὶ ὤφθη ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐν κύκλοις ἑπτά, καὶ θεοὶ [ταῖς] ἐν ἄστρων ἰδέαις ὀπτανόμενοι, σὺν τοῖς αὐτῶν σημείοις ἅπασι, καὶ διηρθρώθη ... σὺν τοῖς ἐν αὐτῆι θεοῖς, καὶ περιειλίγη τὸ περικύκλιον ἀέρι, κυκλίωι δρομήματι πνεύματι θείωι ὀχούμενον.
>
> With all beings unformed and not yet presenced,
> What was lightsome was separated out, upward
> And what was burdensome set in fluidic ground
> With all defined through Fire, then elevated - and conveyed - by Pneuma.
> Thus the heavens became perceivable in seven spheres,
> Deities represented in the arrangements of the stars,
> With the outer revolving in the æther, and circulating by the Pnuema of theos.

https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

4. Telismata, rather than the later English word 'talisman'. As I wrote in *Telesmata In The Picatrix*, included as Appendix II,

> "Telesmata is from Greek τέλεσμα via the post-classic Latin telesma and is possibly the origin of the English word talisman, dating as that English word does from 1638.
>
> τέλεσμα in Ancient Greek meant a payment, or an offering to offset a debt or for services rendered. According to my fallible understanding, in Hellenistic times it acquired the sense of an object intended as an offering to the gods, and to lesser divinities such as daemons, as a mark of respect or in order to seek their favour or ward off their wroth. Thus if a person had toiled to make the offering, the telesma, or had at the very least exchanged goods or money for it, it was believed that such labour or such an exchange revealed that one had earned their protection or their help. The more valuable the object, the more help or protection they might expect.
>
> This belief in such offerings and their efficacy was an integral part of not only the diverse Greco-Roman paganus weltanschauungen but also of many other paganus weltanschauungen around the world, past and present, founded as such weltanschauungen are on the understanding, on the ancestral wisdom, or on the intuition that we mortals are part of a living cosmos with the gods (the divinities) and Nature considered as living beings (or as archetypes, manifestations of cosmic forces) who and which can affect us and who have affected us – as individuals, and as communities – in terms of good fortune and misfortune."

5. Pyros. Fire as archetype, cf. Heraclitus as recounted by Diogenes Laërtius:

> ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα συνεστάναιβεἰς τοῦτο ἀναλύεσθαιbπάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα καὶ πάντα ψυχῶν εἶναι καὶ δαιμόνων πλήρη
>
> The foundation/base/essence of all beings ['things'] is pyros to which they return, with all [of them] by genesis appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] to be bound together again by enantiodromia, and all filled/suffused/vivified with/by ψυχή and Dæmons.

6. Gentle, πρᾶος, a mild, balanced, temperament as in my translation of 5:1–10 of The Gospel Of Matthew, μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν, "Fortunate, the gentle, for they shall acquire the Earth", qv. https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/the-beatitudes-v1.pdf

7. Empyrean. Not 'heaven', but οὐρανός - Empyrean - the abode of the Greco-Roman gods, and also suitable for the abode of those mortals gifted by the Egyptian gods with an after-life. As I noted in my translation of 1:3 of The Gospel Of John:

> οὐρανός here is always translated as 'heaven' although the term 'heaven' - used in the context of the Gospels - now has rather different connotations than the Greek οὐρανός, with the word 'heaven' now often implying something explained by almost two thousand years of exegesis and as depicted, for example, in medieval and Renaissance Christian art. However, those hearing or reading this particular Greek gospel for the first time in the formative years of Christianity would most probably have assumed the usual Greek usage of "the heavens" in the sense of the "the star-filled firmament above" or in the sense of "the sky" or as the abode of theos and/or of the gods, ἐν οὐρανῷ θεοί [...]

> It therefore seems apposite to suggest a more neutral word than 'heaven' as a translation of οὐρανός and one which might not only be understood in various 'classical' ways by an audience of Greek speakers (such as the ways described above) but also be open to a new, and Christian, interpretation consistent with the milieu that existed when the Gospel of John was written and first heard. That is, before the exegesis of later centuries and long before post-Roman Christian iconography. Hence my suggestion of the post-classical Latin term Empyrean, which can bear the interpretation of the abode of theos and/or of the gods, of "the sky", of the "the star-filled firmament above"; and a Christian one suggested by Genesis 2.8 - παράδεισον ἐν Εδεμ (the Paradise of Eden) - and also by shamayim.
>
> https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/myatt-gospel-john-1-5.pdf

Given that *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis* was a translation of an Arabic text the sense of "Ascending from Earth to Empyrean" is also apposite because it does not directly refer to the Christian heaven.

An alternative translation would be Celestial, as in my translation of a passage from Book I, Chapter One, of Ficini's De Vita Coelitus Comparanda:

> Novem studiosorum duces.
>
> Quicunque iter illud asperum arduumque et longum ingrediuntur, quod quidem vix tandem ad excelsum novem Musarum templum assiduo labore perducit, novem omnino itineris huius ducibus indigere videntur. Quorum primi quidem tres in coelo, tres sequentes in animo, postremi tres in terra nos ducunt.
>
> Nine guides for the studious.
>
> Those proceeding along that perilous, arduous, tedious, journey will, following difficulties, finally be brought to the Temple of the Nine Muses for that journey requires nine guides to enable it to be reached: the first three toward the Celestial; the next three toward the Anima, 4 and the last three to guide us [back] to The Earth.
>
> https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2024/01/dwm-notes-on-ficini.pdf

8. Magnum Opus. The work of hermeticism, as for example explained in the Corpus Hermeticum, and the aim of alchemy which is Lapis Philosophicus. In the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticism this is described as the journey, the ἄνοδος, through the seven spheres:

> καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾶι λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῆι πρώτηι ζώνηι δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῆι δευτέραι τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆι τρίτηι τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆι τετάρτηι τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῆι πέμπτηι τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῆι ἕκτηι τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῆι ἑβδόμηι ζώνηι τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.
>
> Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait.
>
> https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

Appendix I

The Latin Text From Secretum Secretorum

Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi
Fasc. V

SECRETUM SECRETORUM

CUM GLOSSIS ET NOTULIS

TRACTATUS BREVIS ET UTILIS
AD DECLARANDUM QUEDAM OBSCURE DICTA

FRATRIS ROGERI

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Veritas ita se habet et non est dubium, quod inferiora superioribus et superiora inferioribus respondent.

Operator miraculorum unus solus est Deus, a quo descendit [1] omnis operacio mirabilis.

Sic omnes res [2] generantur ab una sola substancia [3], una sua sola disposicione.

Quarum pater | est Sol,[4] quarum mater est Luna.[5]

Que portavit ipsam naturam per auram in utero,[6] terra impregnata est ab ea.[7]

Hinc [8] dicitur Sol causatorum pater, thesaurus miraculorum, largitor virtutum.

Ex igne [9] facta [11] est terra [10].

Separa terrenum ab igneo,[12] quia subtile dignius est grosso, et rarum spisso. Hoc fit sapienter et discrete. Ascendit enim de terra in celum, et ruit de celo in terram.[13]

[1] per creacionem et regimen universale mundi.
[2] scilicet, naturales.
[3] scilicet, celestis.
[4] scilicet generans et producens sub Deo.
[5] *Sic omnes res*, scilicet, naturales, istud potest exponi alkimistice et figurative de auro et argento, quia in rebus humanis temporalibus omnia fiunt per aurum et argentum. Unde per solem potest intelligi aurum et per lunam argentum, et hic est mos alkimistarum. Et terra quantum ad res humanas impregnatur et fecundatur per argentum, et aurum est pater miraculorum, et cetera, id est, per ipsum fiunt mirabilia in humanis rebus.

Et inde interficit [1] superiorem et inferiorem virtutem.

Sic ergo dominatur [2] inferioribus et superioribus | et tu dominaberis sursum et deorsum, tecum enim est lux luminum,[3] et propter hoc fugient a te omnes tenebre. Virtus superior vincit omnia.[4]

Omne enim rarum agit in omne densum. Et secundum disposicionem majoris mundi currit hec operacio, et propter hoc vocatur Hermogenes triplex in philosophia.[5]

Appendix II

Telesmata In The Picatrix

Telesmata is from Greek τέλεσμα via the post-classic Latin telesma and is possibly the origin of the English word talisman, dating as that English word does from 1638, with τέλεσμα in Ancient Greek meaning a payment, or an offering to offset a debt or for services rendered. According to my fallible understanding, in Hellenistic times it acquired the sense of an object intended as an offering to the gods, and to lesser divinities such as daemons, as a mark of respect or in order to seek their favour or ward off their wroth. Thus if a person had toiled to make the offering, the telesma, or had at the very least exchanged goods or money for it, it was believed that such labour or such an exchange revealed that one had earned their protection or their help. The more valuable the object, the more help or protection they might expect.

This belief in such offerings and their efficacy was an integral part of not only the diverse Greco-Roman paganus weltanschauungen but also of many other paganus weltanschauungen around the world, past and present, founded as such weltanschauungen are on the understanding, on the ancestral wisdom, or on the intuition that we mortals are part of a living cosmos with the gods (the divinities) and Nature considered as living beings (or as archetypes, manifestations of cosmic forces) who and which can affect us and who have affected us – as individuals, and as communities – in terms of good fortune and misfortune.

For such understanding, such ancestral wisdom, or such intuition included the insight that some mortal deeds were wise and some mortal deeds were unwise because wise deeds were those which aided or did not upset the natural cosmic balance and because unwise deeds – acts of hubris – did upset the natural cosmic balance and invited, sooner or later, retribution by the divinities, be such retribution personal (against the hubriatic individual) or against the family and descendants of that individual or against the community that the hubriatic individual was a part of. A pattern of hubriatic deeds which both Aeschylus and Sophocles so well described: Aeschylus in the Oresteia, and Sophocles in his Antigone and his Oedipus Tyrannus.

In respect of the Greek belief in such divinities and asking for their help there is of course that beautiful poem by Sappho [1]

> ποικιλόθρον’ ἀθανάτ Ἀφρόδιτα,
> παῖ Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
> μή μ’ ἄσαισι μηδ’ ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
> πότνια, θῦμον,
>
> ἀλλὰ τυίδ’ ἔλθ’, αἴ ποτα κἀτέρωτα
> τὰς ἔμας αὔδας ἀίοισα πήλοι
> ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα
> χρύσιον ἦλθες
>
> ἄρμ’ ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ’ ἄγον
> ὤκεες στροῦθοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
> πύκνα δίννεντες πτέρ’ ἀπ’ ὠράνωἴθε-
> ρος διὰ μέσσω·
>
> αἶψα δ’ ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ’, ὦ μάκαιρα,
> μειδιαίσαισ’ ἀθανάτωι προσώπωι
> ἤρε’ ὅττι δηὖτε πέπονθα κὤττι
> δηὖτε κάλημμι
>
> κὤττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
> μαινόλαι θύμωι· τίνα δηὖτε πείθω
> μαισ’ ἄγην ἐς σὰν φιλότατα; τίς σ’, ὦ
> Ψά]πφ’, ἀδικήει;
>
> καὶ γὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
> αἰ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ’, ἀλλὰ δώσει,
> αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
> κωὐκ ἐθέλοισα.
>
> ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον
> ἐκ μερίμναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
> θῦμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον, σὺ δ’ αὔτα
> σύμμαχος ἔσσο.
>
> Deathless Aphrodite – Daughter of Zeus and maker of snares –
> On your florid throne, hear me!
> My lady, do not subdue my heart by anguish and pain
> But come to me as when before
> You heard my distant cry, and listened:

Leaving, with your golden chariot yoked, your father’s house
To move beautiful sparrows swift with a whirling of wings
As from heaven you came to this dark earth through middle air
And so swiftly arrived.

Then you my goddess with your immortal lips smiling
Would ask what now afflicts me, why again
I am calling and what now I with my restive heart
Desired:

> Whom now shall I beguile
> To bring you to her love?
> Who now injures you, Sappho?
> For if she flees, soon shall she chase
> And, rejecting gifts, soon shall she give.
> If she does not love you, she shall do so soon
> Whatsoever is her will.

Come to me now to end this consuming pain
Bringing what my heart desires to be brought:
Be yourself my ally in this fight.

By the time the manuscripts of the Picatrix were written, as translations of a translation of an Arabic manuscript dating from some three or more centuries earlier, the concept of telesmata seems to have become somewhat divorced from its paganus origins since the Picatrix begins with a doxology to a singular God – Ad laudem et gloriam altissimi et omnipotentis Dei cuius est revelare suis predestinatis secreta scienciarum – echoing as it does the doxology to Allah, Al-Ahad, in that earlier Arabic manuscript and containing as that Arabic manuscript does several quotations from the Quran.

Thus, and again according to my fallible understanding, it seems to me that, given the importance attached in both the Latin and the Arabic text to telesmata [2] – the locus has, despite such doxologies, moved away from the paganus understanding of mortals as an integral (Ciceronian) balancing part of the cosmos, as part of Nature and of their community and personally aware of the consequences of hubris, toward the εἶδος – the abstraction – of mortals as individuals who can by telesmata and other means achieve certain personal desires or bring about certain changes beneficial to themselves. Almost as if telesmata and other similar means have replaced the numinous, the paganus, awareness of our status as mortals who depend on the harmony that the older divinities represented, manifest as this awareness is in the phrase *memento homo* [3]. A phrase adopted by the Roman Catholic church in the form "memento homo quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris," [4] and which church, despite its faults, perhaps for centuries kept alive at least something of the paganus understanding of the error of hubris, its awareness of our temporary mortal life and of our fallible mortal nature.

DW Myatt
2017

Note: This text is an edited version of a communication sent this year to someone who had enquired about the relation, if any, between the talismans described in the Latin text entitled Picatrix and Greco-Roman pagan beliefs.

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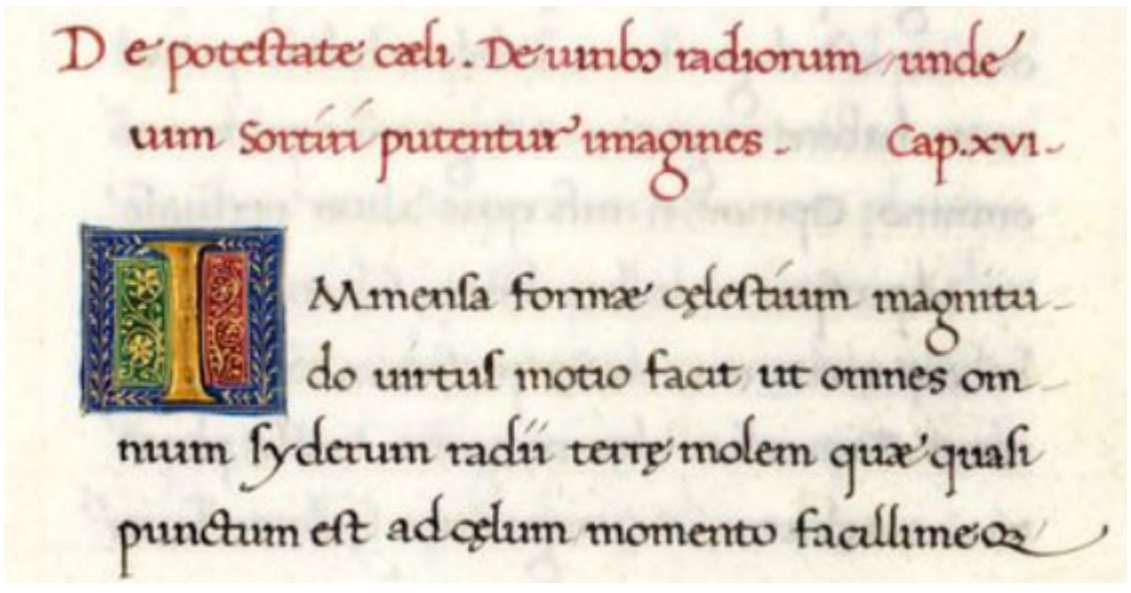
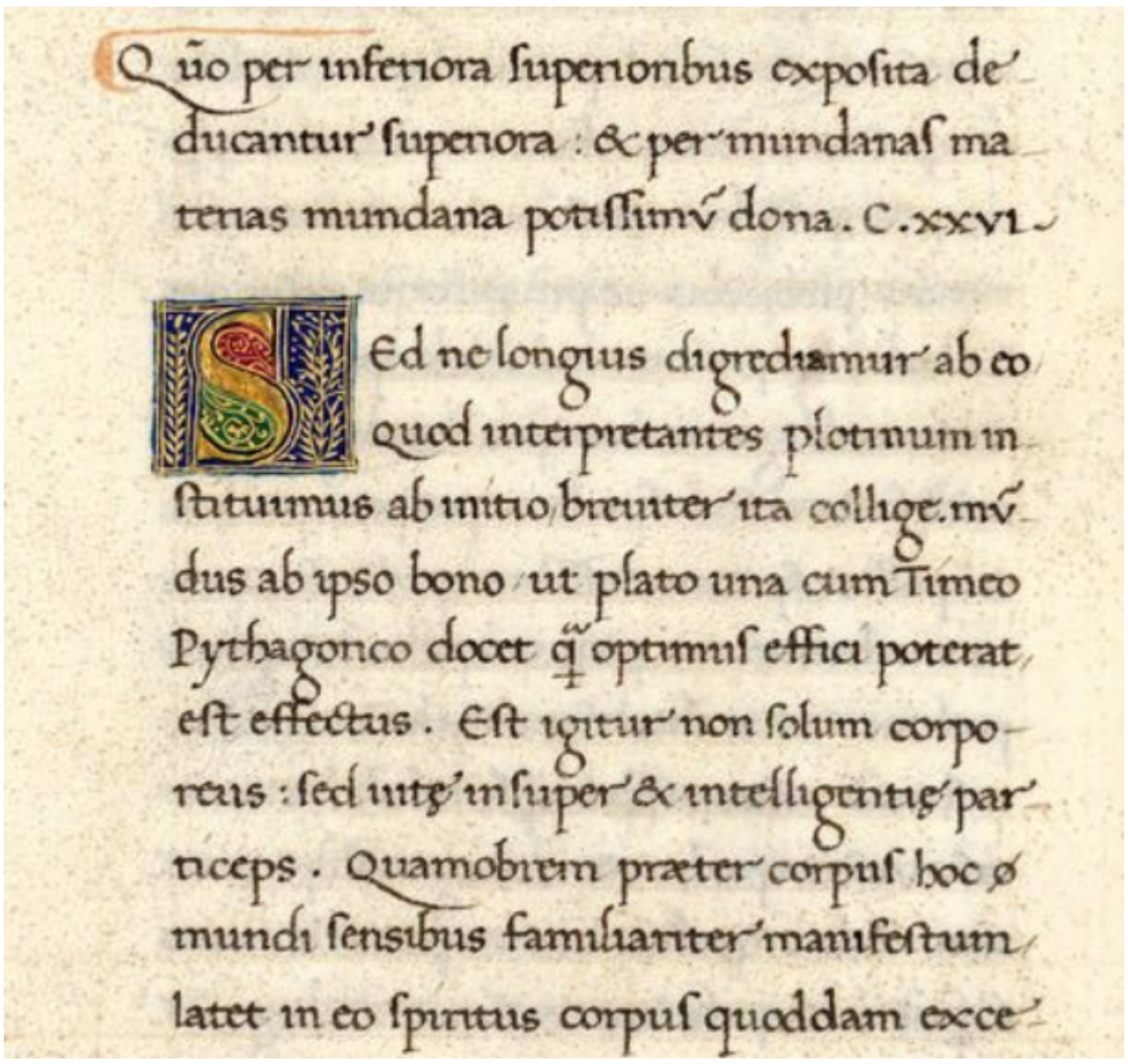
[1] My translation. The Greek text is that of Lobel and Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*, Oxford 1955.

[2] In the Picatrix the word used is imago, usually (in my opinion) mis-translated by the fairly recent (c.1638) word 'talisman' and which English word implies 'a semblance', a crafting by someone of something material which of itself presenced, was a semblance of, what was 'higher', numinous, by something which was 'lower', material, with such a presencing described by Marsilii Ficini in his *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*.


De potestate cæli. De umbo radiorum unde
uim sortiri putentur imagines. Cap.xvi.
Mmensa formæ cælestium magnitu
do uirtus motio facit ut omnes om
nium syderum radii terræ molem quæ quasi
punctum est ad cælum momento facillime

From a 1489 manuscript:
Marsilii Ficini, De Vita Coelitus Comparanda, XVI


Quo per inferiora superioribus exposita de-
ducantur superiora : & per mundanas ma-
terias mundana potissimū dona. C.xxvi.

Sed ne longius digrediamur ab eo
quod interpretantes plotinum in-
stituimus ab initio, breuiter ita colligemū-
dus ab ipso bono ut plato una cum Timeo
Pythagonco docet q̄ optimus effici poterat,
est effectus. Est igitur non solum corpo-
reus : sed uitę insuper & intelligentię par-
ticeps. Quamobrem præter corpus hoc ø
mundi sensibus familiariter manifestum,
latet in eo spiritus corpus quoddam exce-

De Vita Coelitus Comparanda, XXVI

Interestingly, imago occurs in the Latin version of the nine doxologies - v. 31 - of the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, cuius universa natura imago nata est, with the original Greek being οὗ πᾶσα φύσις εἰκὼν ἔφυ which I translate as "you who engender all physis as eikon", with eikon suggestive of what Maximus of Constantinople in his Mystagogia [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence.

[3] Although the use of a similar phrase about mortality in the Triumphus is disputed, there is evidence to suggest that during those victory processions in Rome the triumphant General was reminded by someone of his mortality, qv. M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007. p. 272f.

[4] "Recall, mortal, you are dust and you will revert to being dust."

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Some Notes On De Vita Coelitus Comparanda
And Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis

Chapter One

The genesis of this essay was some correspondence from a reader of my translation of *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis* who enquired about the Latin text of the two illustrations from a manuscript of De Vita Coelitus Comparanda that I included. In response, I translated the relevant passages, in the process discovering some interesting connections to the Corpus Hermeticum, alchemy, and the Art (Latin Ars) of μαγικός as understood by Pliny the Elder, Ovid, and Tacitus, with Pliny in Book XXX, iii relating that Homer's Odyssey is based upon that Art and recounts a legend that Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, and Plato, all journeyed abroad to learn that Art. [1]

The context of those passages in my *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis* are the heading and the beginning of Book I, Chapter One of *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* and the heading and the beginning of Book III.

The heading and the beginning of Book I, Chapter One of *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* are, together with my translation:

> Novem studiosorum duces.
>
> Quicunque iter illud asperum arduumque et longum ingrediuntur, quod quidem vix tandem ad excelsum novem Musarum templum assiduo labore perducit, novem omnino itineris huius ducibus indigere videntur. Quorum primi quidem tres in coelo, tres sequentes in animo, postremi tres in terra nos ducunt.
>
> Nine guides for the studious. [2]
>
> Those proceeding along that perilous, arduous, tedious, journey will, following difficulties, finally be brought to the Temple of the Nine Muses for that journey requires nine guides to enable it to be reached: the first three toward the Celestial; [3] the next three toward the Anima, [4] and the last three to guide us [back] to The Earth.

Καλλιόπη, The Beautiful-Voiced Muse
(Pio Clementino Museum, Vatican City)

ταῦτ᾽ ἄρα Μοῦσαι ἄειδον, Ὀλύμπια δώματ᾽ ἔχουσαι,
ἐννέα θυγατέρες μεγάλου Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖαι,
Κλειώ τ᾽ Εὐτέρπη τε Θάλειά τε Μελπομένη τε
Τερψιχόρη τ᾽ Ἐρατώ τε Πολύμνιά τ᾽ Οὐρανίη τε
Καλλιόπη θ᾽: ἣ δὲ προφερεστάτη ἐστὶν ἀπασέων.

Hesiod, Theogony, 75-79

Such were the things the Muses who dwell on Olympus sang:
those nine daughters born of Mighty Zeus.
Cleio, Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene,
Terpsichore, Erato, Polyhymnia, Urania,
and Kalliope who is pre-eminent among them all.

°°°

The heading and the beginning of Book III are, together with my translation:

> Marsilii Ficini Florentini Liber De Vita Coelitus Comparanda compositus ab eo inter Commentaria eiusdem in Plotinum.
>
> In quo consistat secundum Plotinum virtus favorem coelitus attrahens, scilicet in eo, quod anima mundi et stellarum daemonumque animae facile alliciuntur corporum formis accommodatis.
>
> A book by Marsilius Ficinus the Florentine Concerning Acquiring Life From The Celestial, and written around his commentaries on Plotinus.
>
> Following Plotinus, what ability is there that can worthily presence [5] the celestial? It is this: when the Forms [6] correspond to their corporeality, the anima-mundi [7] and the anima of the stars and of daemons [8] can be obtained and accommodated.

Which places into context Ficini's use in Chapter XXVI of Book III of the alchemical expression Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, which is a restatement of an expression from the Arabic text in *Sirr al-khalīqa* dating from several centuries earlier, which I translated as

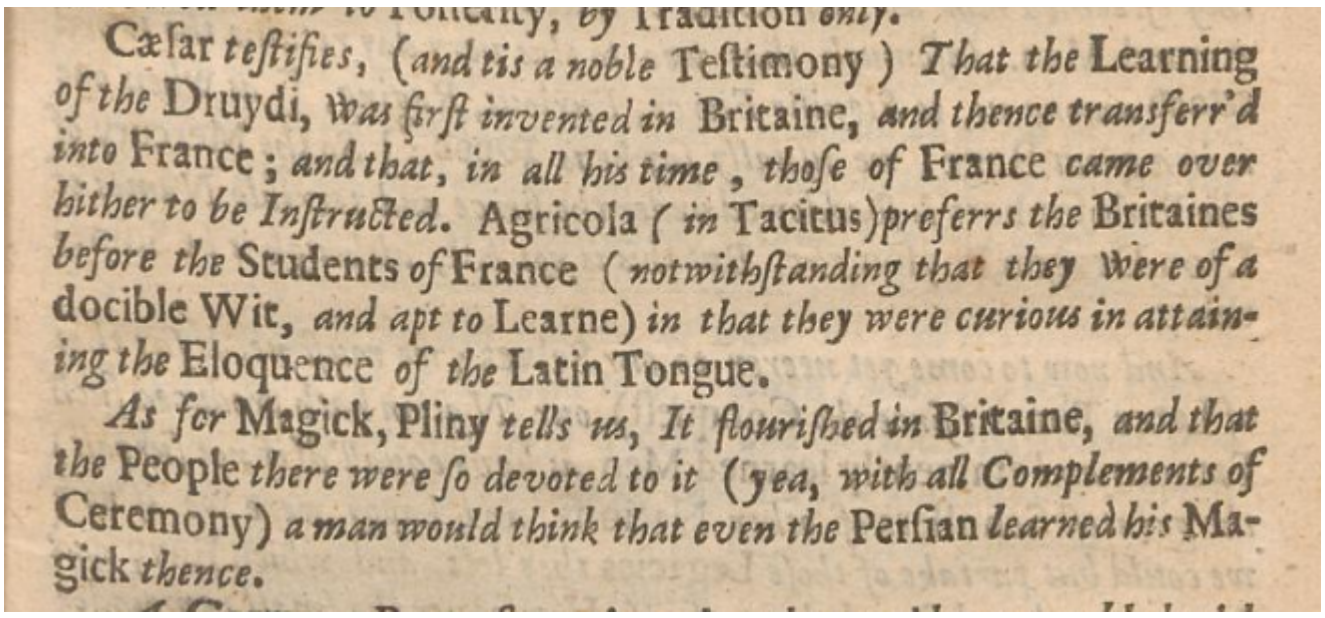
> For the higher is as the lower
> With the lower as the higher.

Which brings us to the Latin text of the two manuscript illustrations mentioned above published in my Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis.

°°°

Notes On Terms Used

1. The term μαγικός - Latin magicas - was later translated, in my view mistranslated, as 'magick' and which 'magick' was described by Elias Ashmole in relation to the Druids in his *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* published in 1652:



Cæſar *teſtifies*, (*and tis a noble* Teſtimony) *That the* Learning *of the* Druydi, *was firſt invented in* Britaine, *and thence transferr'd into* France; *and that, in all his time, thoſe of* France *came over hither to be Inſtructed.* Agricola (*in* Tacitus) *preferrs the* Britaines *before the* Students *of* France (*notwithſtanding that they were of a* docible Wit, *and apt to* Learne) *in that they were curious in attaining the* Eloquence *of the* Latin Tongue.

As for Magick, Pliny *tells us, It flouriſhed in* Britaine, *and that the* People *there were ſo devoted to it* (*yea, with all Complements of* Ceremony) *a man would think that even the* Perſian *learned his* Magick *thence.*

2. Studiosus. Studious, rather than 'eager'.

3. Celestial rather than 'heavenly' since stars and planets are meant.

4. Anima. Retaining the Latin, and not translating as 'soul' since it is a basic hermetic and alchemical principle later appropriated and reinterpreted by Carl Jung. The context is the expression "anima mundi" which Ficini goes on to use and which is usually translated as "world-soul" - German Weltseele - whereas what is implied is ψυχὴ κόσμου with κόσμος as suggested in the Corpus Hermeticum (Poemandres:17, Tractate VIII:1 and by Cicero) an ordered structure which includes we human beings, the Earth, and the celestial.

Thus an alternative would be to translate as psyche, as in Tractate VIII, 1 of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> Περὶ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, ὦ παῖ, νῦν λεκτέον, τρόπωι μὲν ποίωι ἀθάνατος ἡ ψυχή, ἐνέργεια δὲ ποταπή ἐστι συστάσεως σώματος καὶ διαλύσεως. περὶ οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν ὁ θάνατος, ἀλλὰ νόημά ἐστιν ἀθανάτου προσηγορίας, ἢ κενὸν ἔργον ἢ κατὰ στέρησιν τοῦ πρώτου γράμματος λεγόμενος θάνατος ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀθάνατος. ὁ γὰρ θάνατος ἀπωλείας ἐστίν· οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν ἐν τῶι κόσμωι ἀπόλλυται. εἰ γὰρ δεύτερος θεὸς ὁ κόσμος καὶ ζῶιον ἀθάνατον, ἀδύνατόν ἐστι τοῦ ἀθανάτου ζώιου μέρος τι ἀποθανεῖν· πάντα δὲ τὰ ἐν τῶι κόσμωι μέρη ἐστὶ τοῦ κόσμου, μάλιστα δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, τὸ λογικὸν ζῶιον.
>
> It is regarding psyche and the corporeal that, my son, we now must speak: of why psyche is deathless and how its vigour assembles and separates the corporeal. For there is no death of what-is, only an apprehension grounded in the denotatum 'deathless', either through unavailing toil or, by discarding the important part, that what is called deathless is deathful. That is, for the deathful there is a loss. But nothing of the Kosmos is ever lost, for if Kosmos is a second theos and a deathless living being then it is not possible for any portion of such a deathless living being to be lost since all beings of Kosmos are part of Kosmos, as most certainly are mortals, the noetic living being.

Notes of the translation:

corporeal. σῶμα. Here, the context - qv. for example the following τῶν γὰρ οὐρανίων τὰ σώματα μίαν τάξιν ἔχει in section 4 and τοῦ δὲ ἔννοιαν λαμβάνει ὡς ἀσωμάτου καὶ νοῦ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ in section 5 - suggests corporeal rather than a literal body. A subtle distinction, between "of the nature of matter" and a specific type of "physical body". Compare also the fourth tractate: ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου, τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἄλλῳ τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον.

apprehension. νόημα. cf. Poemandres 3, "I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings."

denotatum. For προσηγορία. In this case, the denotatum - the naming - is the word 'deathless'.

the noetic living being. τὸ λογικὸν ζῷον. The word λογικός imputes the sense of both the faculty of speech and the faculty of thought, something well-expressed by Sophocles: φθέγμα καὶ ἀνεμόεν φρόνημα καὶ ἀστυνόμους ὀργὰς ἐδιδάξατο καὶ δυσαύλων πάγων ὑπαίθρεια καὶ δύσομβρα φεύγειν βέλη παντοπόρος, (Antigone, 355f).

There is also in Tractate XI:14 the enigmatic

> ζωὴ δέ ἐστιν ἕνωσις νοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς· θάνατος δὲ οὐκ ἀπώλεια τῶν συναχθέντων, διάλυσις δὲ τῆς ἑνώσεως
>
> Life is the enosis of perceiverance and psyche, while death is not the loss of what was joined but the end of enosis.

Which as I explained in my commentary on the verse returns us to the mention of Plotinus by Ficini:

> enosis. ἕνωσις. A transliteration given that it is a mystical term with a particular meaning and describes something more than is denoted by the ordinary English word 'union'. It was, for example used by Plotinus, by Maximus of Constantinople, and was part of the mystic philosophy attributed to Pseudo- Dionysius, The Areopagite - qv. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca. vol IV, 396A. 1857 - and denoted, for Plotinus, a desirable ascent (ἄνοδος) and a 'merging with The One', and for both the Areopagite and Maximus of Constantinople a self-less mystical experience of God.

To translate as psyche has a long history in English, dating back to 1559. In 1918, DeWitt Burton published a monograph - listing, with quotations, the various senses of πνεῦμα - titled *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918).

5. The term 'presenced' is from the noun 'presencing' (derived from the Latin praesentia) and means "the action or process of making some-thing manifest and/or present and/or established."

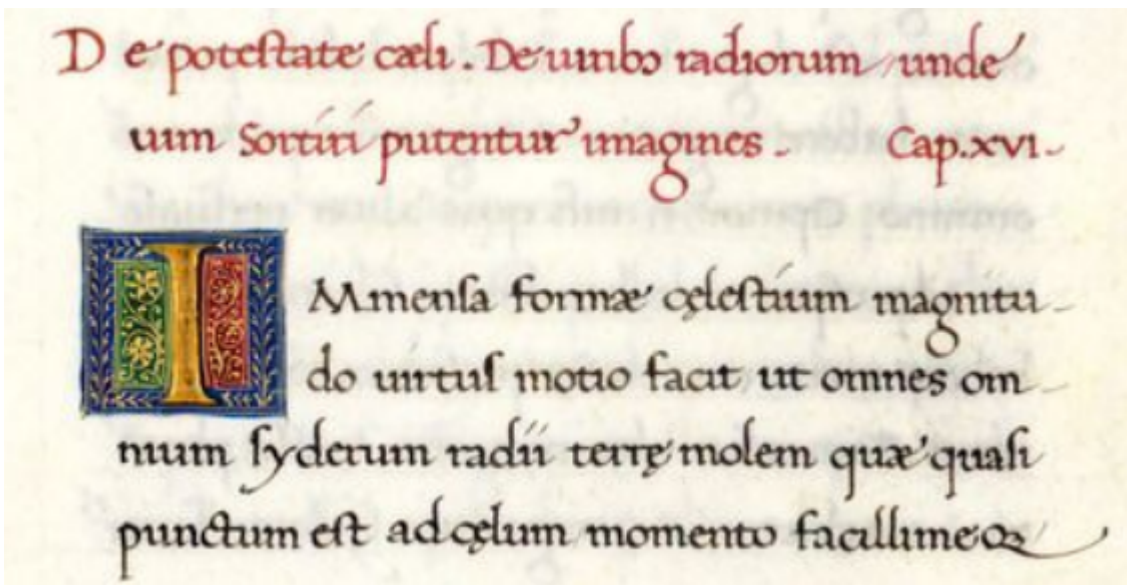
6. Formis. Forms, such as a human manufactured shape/artefact. Thus the physical, earthly, corporeal form or shape is a mimesis (μἵμησις) of a celestial or several celestial ones. Which corporeal Form could be a telesmata into which what is celestial can be presenced, drawn-down. Regarding telesmata, qv the appendix *Telesmata In The Picatrix* in my *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis*.

7. See note 4 for the context.

8. Daemons. The guardian entities of sacred places who could bring fortune or misfortune to human beings, qv. the saying attributed to Heraclitus as recorded by Diogenes Laërtius:

> ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα συνεστάναι εἰς τοῦτο ἀναλύεσθαι πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα καὶ πάντα ψυχῶν εἶναι καὶ δαιμόνων πλήρη
>
> The foundation/base/essence of all beings ['things'] is pyros to which they return, with all [of them] by genesis appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] to be bound together again by enantiodromia, and all filled/suffused/vivified with/by ψυχή and Dæmons.

Chapter Two


De potestate cæli. De uiribus radiorum unde
uim sortiri putentur imagines. Cap.xvi.
Mmensa formæ cælestium magnitu
do uirtus motio facit ut omnes om
nium syderum radii terræ molem quæ quasi
punctum est ad cælum momento facillimeq

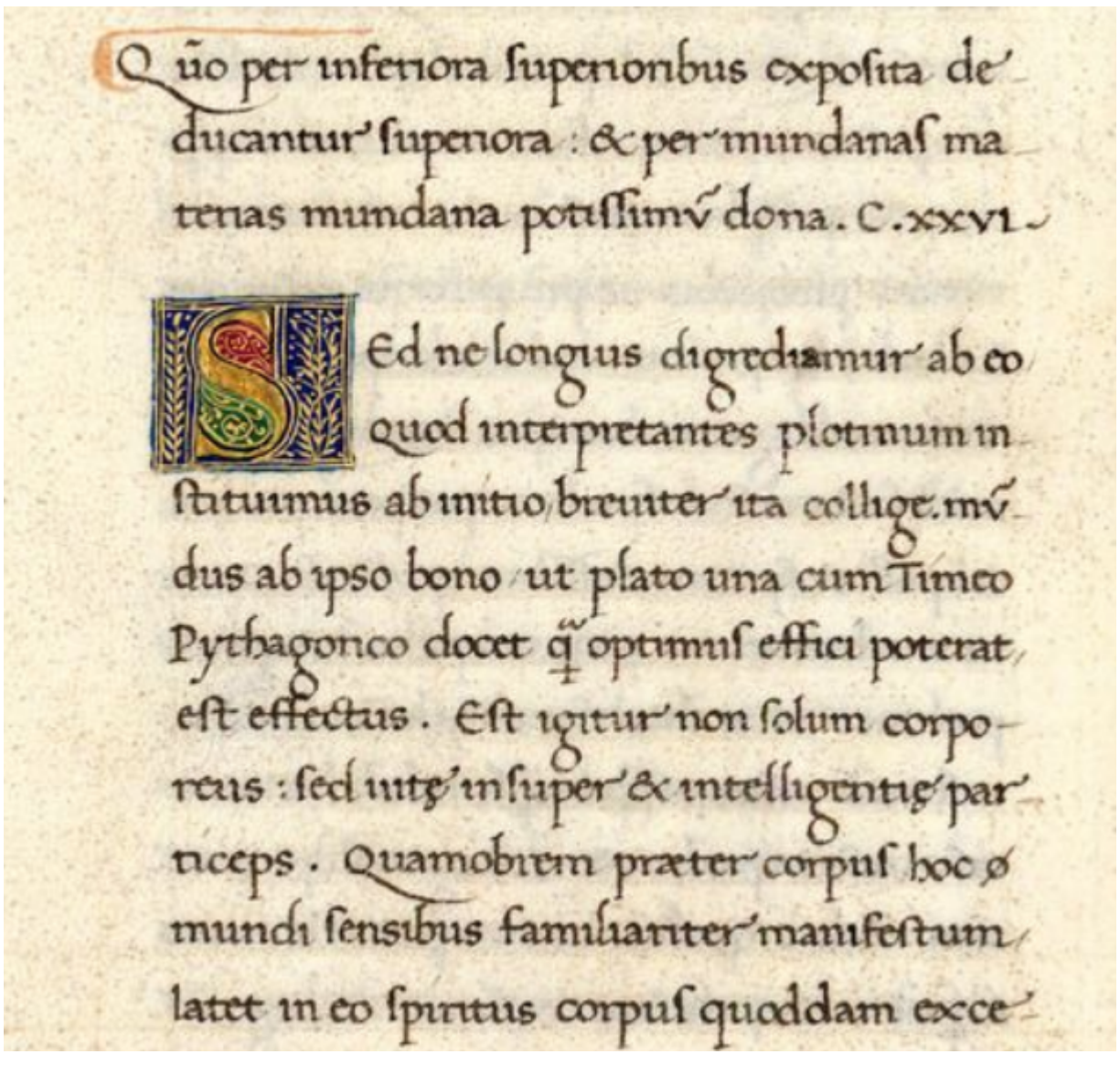
The Latin text and my translation of this image, from my Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis, of the beginning of Ficini's Chapter XVI are:

> De potestate coeli. De viribus radiorum, unde vim sortiri putentur imagines.

On the operation of the celestial. On the potency of emanations [1] on which telesmata [2] are considered to draw.

Immensa ferme coelestium magnitudo, virtus, motio facit, ut omnes omnium siderum radii terrae molem, quae quasi punctum est ad coelum, momento facillimeque usque ad centrum recti penetrent, quod omnes astronomi confitentur.

The immense magnitude, potency and movement of the celestial results in the emanations entering the bulk of the Earth, just a point compared to the celestial, with no difficulty and to its centre, as all astronomers agree.


Quo per inferiora superioribus exposita de
ducantur superiora: & per mundanas ma
terias mundana potissimū dona. C.xxvi.
Sed ne longius digrediamur ab eo
quod interpretantes plotinum in
stituimus ab initio breuiter ita colligē. mū
dus ab ipso bono ut plato una cum Timeo
Pythagonco docet q̄ optimus effici poterat,
est effectus. Est igitur non solum corpo
reus: sed uitę insuper & intelligentię par
ticeps. Quamobrem præter corpus hoc ø
mundi sensibus familiariter manifestum,
latet in eo spiritus corpus quoddam exce

The Latin text and my translation of this part of Chapter XXVI:

> Quo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona.

> How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presenced [3] therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned.
>
> Sed ne longius digrediamur ab eo, quod interpretantes Plotinum instituimus ab initio, breviter ita collige: mundus ab ipso bono (ut Plato una cum Timaeo Pythagorico docet), quam optimus effici poterat, est effectus. Est igitur non solum corporeus, sed vitae insuper et intelligentiae particeps.
>
> However, to be concise lest we digress too far from our interpretation of Plotonus: Mundus [4] as Plato and Timeus the Pythagorean informed us, was by Fairness [5] itself able to be optimally arranged. Thus it is not solely corporeal, but with Life and Perceiveration [6] and the ability to perceive and discern what is perceived.

°°°

Notes On Terms Used

1. Emanations. Not 'rays' or anything similar. Emanations of the divine body' sent down as human beings:

> κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ζώιου ἀθανάτου ζῶιον θνητόν, καὶ ὁ μὲν κόσμος τῶν ζώιων ἐπλεονέκτει τὸ ἀείζωον, καὶ τοῦ κόσμου τὸν λόγον καὶ τὸν νοῦν. θεατὴς γὰρ ἐγένετο τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἐθαύμασε καὶ ἐγνώρισε τὸν ποιήσαντα.
>
> A cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings,
> For just as the ever-living cosmic order had an advantage over them
> So did they have an advantage over other living beings in their cosmos
> Because of Logos and Perceiverance.
> Thus did mortals perceive the works of theos, admire them,
> Gaining knowledge of their creator.
>
> Tractate IV:2

Apposite here is my commentary of that verse:

> Hence why the twenty-sixth chapter of the book De Vita Coelitus Comparanda by Marsilii Ficini (published in 1489 CE) has as its heading:
> Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona.
>
> > How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presenced therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned.
>
> Also, in respect of ἄνθρωπος I have used here - as in my Poemandres - the gender neutral 'human being' instead of the more usual 'man', and also - as
> there - occasionally used the term 'mortal' when the context suggests it. Regarding 'the cosmic order' (κόσμος) itself qv. Poemandres 7; 14, and Ιερός
> Λόγος 4:
>
> > τὸ γὰρ θεῖον ἡ πᾶσα κοσμικὴ σύγκρασις φύσει ἀνανεουμένη· ἐν γὰρ τῶι θείωι καὶ ἡ φύσις καθέστηκεν
> >
> > The divine is all of that mixion: renewance of the cosmic order through Physis
> > For Physis is presenced in the divine.
> >
> > mixion. Alternate (old) spelling of mixtion, meaning the condition or state of being mixed, melded, compounded, combined.

2. Regarding telesmata, qv the appendix *Telesmata In The Picatrix* in my *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis*.

3. The term 'presenced' is from the noun 'presencing' (derived from the Latin praesentia) and means "the action or process of making some-thing manifest and/or present and/or established."

4. Mundus. Not simply 'the earth' but κόσμος, as in Tractate IV of the Corpus Hermeticum: κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον, a cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings."

5. Bonum. Not an abstract or theological 'good' subject to exegesis, but personal fairness, equity, balance, nobility manifest in deeds.

6. Intellegentia. Not 'intelligence' which has too many irrelevant modern connotations but perceiveration as in Tractate IV:2-4 of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ζώιου ἀθανάτου ζῶιον θνητόν, καὶ ὁ μὲν κόσμος τῶν ζώιων ἐπλεονέκτει τὸ ἀείζωον, καὶ τοῦ κόσμου τὸν λόγον καὶ τὸν νοῦν. θεατὴς γὰρ ἐγένετο τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἐθαύμασε καὶ ἐγνώρισε τὸν ποιήσαντα.
>
> τὸν μὲν οὖν λόγον, ὦ Τάτ, ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐμέρισε, τὸν δὲ νοῦν οὐκέτι, οὐ φθονῶν τισιν· ὁ γὰρ

φθόνος οὐκ ἔνθεν ἔρχεται, κάτω δὲ συνίσταται ταῖς τὸν νοῦν μὴ ἐχόντων ἀνθρώπων ψυχαῖς. – Διὰ τί οὖν, ὦ πάτερ, οὐ πᾶσιν ἐμέρισε τὸν νοῦν ὁ θεός; – Ἠθέλησεν, ὦ τέκνον, τοῦτον ἐν μέσωι ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὥσπερ ἆθλον ἱδρῦσθαι.

– Καὶ ποῦ αὐτὸν ἱδρύσατο; – Κρατῆρα μέγαν πληρώσας τούτου κατέπεμψε, δοὺς κήρυκα, καὶ ἐκέλευσεν αὐτῶι κηρύξαι ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καρδίαις τάδε· βάπτισον σεαυτὴν ἡ δυναμένη εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ πιστεύουσα ὅτι ἀνελεύσηι πρὸς τὸν καταπέμψαντα τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ γνωρίζουσα ἐπὶ τί γέγονας. ὅσοι μὲν οὖν συνῆκαν τοῦ κηρύγματος καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τέλειοι ἐγένοντο ἄνθρωποι, τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι· ὅσοι δὲ ἥμαρτον τοῦ κηρύγματος, οὗτοι μὲν οἱ λογικοί, τὸν νοῦν μὴ προσειληφότες, ἀγνοοῦντες ἐπὶ τί γεγόνασιν καὶ ὑπὸ τίνων,

[2] A cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings,
For just as the ever-living cosmic order had an advantage over them
So did they have an advantage over other living beings in their cosmos
Because of Logos and Perceiverance.
Thus did mortals perceive the works of theos, admire them,
Gaining knowledge of their creator.

[3] Thus, Thoth, to all mortals logos was assigned, but not perceiverance
Even though there was no ill-will, for such ill-will arrives not from there
But below, associated with mortals whose Psyche does not convey Perceiverance.
On account of what, father, did theos not assign perceiverance to all?
Son, the desire was to position it half-way between those psyches, as a reward.

[4] Where, then, was it placed?
In that large repleteful chaldron which was dispatched down
With an envoy assigned to declaim to the hearts of mortals:
If you have strength enough, immerse yourself in the chaldron
Should you accept you can ascend -
Having discovered how you came-into-being -
To the one who dispatched down that chaldron.
The many who understood that declaration and were immersive with perceiveration
Gained a certain knowledge, becoming more complete mortals
Through having received the perceiveration
While the many who misunderstood that declaration,
Having logos without the addition of perceiveration,
Are unperceptive regarding how and why they came-into-being.

Summa

The "perilous, arduous, tedious, journey" mentioned by Ficini can lead to the knowledge of "the operation of the celestial [and] the potency of emanations" and thus to an understanding of telesmata snd of how they are a mimesis, μῖμησις.

The tedious journey can be an alchemical one, a hermetic ἄνοδος as described in the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum; or a studious one involving alchemical texts such as Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis, Ghayat al-Ḥakim and its Latin version titled Picatrix; or a more 'occult' one, based on mimesis and the Art of μαγικός, such as outlined in De Vita Coelitus Comparanda.

David Myatt
January 26th 2024

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§ David Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum*, e-text 2017. (i) Printed version, ISBN-13: 978-1976452369 (ii) Gratis pdf, https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

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ΕΡΜΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΙΣΜΕΓ.

ϖρὸς τὸν υἱὸν Τὰτ ἐν ὄρϕ λόγος ἀπόκρυφος
ϖερὶ παλιγγενεσίας, καὶ σιγῆς ἐπαγγελίας.

Ν τοῖς γενικοῖς ὦ πάτερ, αἰνιγματωδῶς, καὶ οὐ τηλαυγῶς ἔφησας ϖερὶ θεότητος διαλεγόμενος· καὶ οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψας, Φάνθωνος μηδένα δεῖσθαι ϕωνῶν ϖερὶ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας, ἐμοῦ τέ σου ἱκέτου γενομένου ὑπὲ τῆς τοῦ ὄρεως μεταβάσεως, μὴ δέ σε ἐμοὶ διαλεχθῆναι, καὶ πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν, ὅτι τοῦτον

°°°

Some Notes On Translating Tractate XIII

As with many of the tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum, the Greek text of tractate XIII provides an interesting insight into ancient Hellenic paganism and mysticism. It also – as with most of those tractates – presents the translator with certain problems, sometimes related to textual corruption, sometimes grammatical (should ῥοίζῳ, for example, in v. 9 of XIII be related to νικηθεῖσαι or to ἐξέπτησαν) and many of which problems concern the variety of meanings which can be assigned to certain words, as for instance in the important matter of νοῦς which is invariably translated as either "intellect" or as "mind", neither of which is satisfactory especially given what both of those English words now often denote almost two thousand years after those Greek tractates were written.

My own choice in this tractate in respect of νοῦς – as in my translations of other Hermetic tractates – is perceiveration/perceiverance, which, even though such English words hint at what I believe νοῦς meant and implied esoterically and philosophically in Hellenistic times, are not entirely satisfactory. The only reasonable alternative seems to be a transliteration, as I do in this tractate – and have done in other tractates – in respect of λόγος, θεός and several other Greek words.

However, given that the goal of the translator is to provide for the general reader an intelligible interpretation of the text, to utilize transliterations for every problematic word would fail to accomplish that goal. Which is why the translator has to use their judgement and why every translation is 'an interpretation of meaning'.

Such problematic words occur not only in the title of tractate XIII but also from the very first line of the text. In respect of the title – Ερμού του τρισμεγίστου προς τον υιόν Τάτ εν όρει λόγος απόκρυφος περί παλιγγενεσίας και σιγής επαγγελία – there is the question of translating (i) Τάτ, (ii) λόγος απόκρυφος, (iii) παλιγγενεσία, and (iv) ἐπαγγελία. In respect of the first line there is the question, at the very beginning, of Ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς, and what ὦ πάτερ – and the related ὦ τέκνον – might imply.

All of which questions – and the many subsequent ones together with the Cantio Arcana (The Esoteric Song) of sections 17 and 18 – make tractate XIII most interesting in regard to ancient Hellenic paganism and mysticism.

Title

A conventional translation of the title (by GRS Mead) is: "Concerning Rebirth and the Promise of Silence Of Thrice-greatest Hermes unto Tat his Son."

My translation, however, is:

> "On A Mountain: Hermes Trismegistus To His Son Thoth, An Esoteric Discourse Concerning Palingenesis And The Requirement of Silence."

Which translation requires some explanation:

> *Thoth*. As in other tractates I translate Τάτ by Thoth, avoiding the conventional *Tat* which, in English, has a colloquial meaning inappropriate here. As to which 'Thoth' is meant, the consensus is that in this and some other tractates it refers to the son (possibly biologically or more probably metaphorically) of Hermes Trismegistus who himself was named by the Greeks as Thoth, with the Τάτ of some other tractates being a

scribal corruption of the name Thoth.

Esoteric Discourse. λόγος απόκρυφος. While 'esoteric' is an apt translation in regard to απόκρυφος, 'discourse' is not entirely satisfactory in respect of λόγος since it could be here interpreted to mean 'disclosure' or 'explanation'. However, given what follows in section 1 – πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν…παραδιδόναι μοι – 'discourse' does seem appropriate.

Palingenesis. Rather than ascribe a particular meaning to παλιγγενεσία – such as 'rebirth' or 'regeneration' – I have chosen the English word palingenesis (from the Latin palingenesia) with that word explained by what follows in this particular discourse, qv. sections 12 and 13.

Requirement. The sense of ἐπαγγελία here, given what is discussed in this tractate, is 'requirement' rather than the strident 'command' or what is implied by the rather vague word 'promise'.

The First Line

The first part of the first line of XIII is: Ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς, ὦ πάτερ, αἰνιγματωδῶς καὶ οὐ τηλαυγῶς ἔφρασας περὶ θειότητος διαλεγόμενος.

Conventionally: "In the General Sermons, father, thou didst speak in riddles most unclear, conversing on Divinity."

My translation is:

When, father, you in the Exoterica conversed about divinity your language was enigmatic and obscure.

Which translation, as with title, requires some explanation:

Father. The Greek ὦ πάτερ – literally 'my father' – is a polite form of address, akin to the English 'sir'. Similarly, ὦ τέκνον – 'my son' – is a polite reply. Given the esoteric nature of the text, a possible interpretation here of ὦ πάτερ would be 'Master', and of ὦ τέκνον 'my pupil'.

in the Exoterica. Ἐν τοῖς γενικοῖς. Since the term γενικῶν λόγων occurs in tractate X it is reasonable to assume that γενικός here refers to the same thing although the meaning of the term is moot given that no details are provided in this tractate nor in tractate X, nor in Stobaeus – *Excerpts*, III, 1 and VI, 1 – where the term also occurs. While most translators have assumed that it refers to 'generic' things or 'generalities' and thus (by adding λόγοι) have opted for an expression such as 'General Sermons', and given that a transliteration – such as genikois or genikoi – is awkward, I have in respect of the γενικοὶ opted for exoterica (from the Latin via the Greek τὰ ἐξωτερικά) with the meaning of "exoteric treatises designed for or suitable to the generality of disciples or students," with the plausible suggestion thus being that there are exoteric Hermetic treatises and esoteric Hermetic treatises, with Reitzenstein describing these other treatises as διεξοδικοί λόγοι (R.A. Reitzenstein. *Poimandres*. Teubner, Leipzig. 1904. p.118) a distinction he also mentioned in his later work *Die Hellenistischen Mysterien Religionen*. One such esoteric treatise is tractate XIII.

The Esoteric Song

This much translated part of XIII has, in my opinion, been somewhat misunderstood given, for example, that θεὸς has invariably been translated by 'God' – implying as that word now so often does the God of Christianity – and φῶς (as in translations of the New Testament) translated by 'light', with ἀλήθεια as some kind of abstract 'truth', and with ὕμνος as 'hymn' suggestive as that English word now so often is of the hymns of Christian worship.

Conventionally, the first few verses are translated along the following lines:

"Let every nature of the World receive the utterance of my hymn!
Open thou Earth! Let every bolt of the Abyss be drawn for me. Stir not, ye Trees!
I am about to hymn creation's Lord, both All and One.
Ye Heavens open, and ye Winds stay still; and let God's deathless Sphere receive my word."

My translation [1] is as follows:

Let every Physis of Kosmos favourably listen to this song.
Gaia: be open, so that every defence against the Abyss is opened for me;
Trees: do not incurvate;
For I now will sing for the Master Artisan,
For All That Exists, and for The One.
Open: you Celestial Ones; and you, The Winds, be calm.
Let the deathless clan of theos accept this, my logos.

Which, for me at least, evokes – as tractate XIII does in its entirety – something redolent of paganism rather than of Christianity.

David Myatt
2017

[1] https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

Image credit:
The beginning of tractate XIII from the book *Mercvrii Trismegisti Pœmandres*, published in Paris in 1554

Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum

Three of the many Greek terms of interest in respect of understanding the varied weltanschauungen outlined in the texts that comprise the Corpus Hermeticum are ἀγαθός and νοῦς and θεός, with conventional translations of these terms as 'good' and 'Mind' and 'god' (or God) imparting the sense of reading somewhat declamatory sermons about god/God and 'the good' familiar from over a thousand years of persons preaching about Christianity interspersed with definitive philosophical statements about 'Mind', as if a "transcendent intelligence, rationality," or a "Mental or psychic faculty" or both, or something similar, is meant or implied.

Thus the beginning of tractate VI - τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὦ ᾽Ασκληπιέ, ἐν οὐδενί ἐστιν, εἰ μὴ ἐν μόνῳ τῷ θεῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς ἀεί - and dealing as it does with both ἀγαθός and θεός, has been translated, by Mead, as "Good, O Asclepius, is in none else save God alone; nay, rather, Good is God Himself eternally," [1] and by Copenhaver as "The good, Asclepius, is in nothing except in god alone, or rather god himself is always the good." [2]

In respect of νοῦς, a typical example is from Poemandres 12 - ὁ δὲ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ Νοῦς, ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς, ἀπεκύησεν ῎Ανθρωπον αὐτῷ ἴσον, οὗ ἡράσθη ὡς ἰδίου τόκου· περικαλλὴς γάρ, τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα ἔχων· ὄντως γὰρ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡράσθη τῆς ἰδίας μορφῆς, παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα. The beginning of this is translated by Mead as "But All-Father Mind, being Life and Light, did bring forth Man co-equal to Himself, with whom He fell in love, as being His own child for he was beautiful beyond compare," and by Copenhaver as "Mind, the father of all, who is life and light, gave birth to a man like himself whom he loved as his own child. The man was most fair: he had the father's image."

Similarly, in respect of Poemandres 22 - παραγίνομαι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ὁ Νοῦς τοῖς ὁσίοις καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς καὶ ἐλεήμοσι, τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσι, καὶ ἡ παρουσία μου γίνεται βοήθεια, καὶ εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσιν εὐλογοῦντες καὶ ὑμνοῦντες τεταγμένως πρὸς αὐτὸν τῇ στοργῇ - which is translated by Mead as "I, Mind, myself am present with holy men and good, the pure and merciful, men who live piously. [To such] my presence doth become an aid, and straightway they gain gnosis of all things, and win the Father’s love by their pure lives, and give Him thanks, invoking on Him blessings, and chanting hymns, intent on Him with ardent love," and by Copenhaver as "I myself, the mind, am present to the blessed and good and pure and merciful - to the reverent - and my presence becomes a help; they quickly recognize everything, and they propitiate the father lovingly and give thanks, praising and singing hymns affectionately and in the order appropriate to him."

As explained in various places in my commentary on tractates I, III, IV, VIII, and XI, and in two appendices [3], I incline toward the view that - given what such English terms as 'the good', Mind, and god now impute, often as a result of two thousand years of Christianity and post-Renaissance, and modern, philosophy - such translations tend to impose particular and modern interpretations on the texts and thus do not present to the reader the ancient ethos that forms the basis of the varied weltanschauungen outlined in the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum.

To avoid such impositions, and in an endeavour to express at least something of that ancient (and in my view non-Christian) ethos, I have - for reasons explained in the relevant sections of my commentary - transliterated θεὸς as theos [4], νοῦς as perceiveration, or according to context, perceiverance; and ἀγαθός as, according to context, nobility, noble, or honourable [5]. Which is why my reading of the Greek of the three examples above provides the reader with a somewhat different impression of the texts:

> ° Asclepius, the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone; indeed, theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. [6]
>
> ° Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all, brought forth in his own likeness a most beautiful mortal who, being his child, he loved.
>
> ° I, perceiveration, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

But, as I noted in respect of ἀγαθός in the *On Ethos And Interpretation* appendix, whether these particular insights of mine are valid, others will have to decide. But they - and my translations of the tractates in general - certainly, at least in my fallible opinion, convey an impression about ancient Hermeticism which is rather different from that conveyed by other translations.

David Myatt
March 2017

Extract from a letter in reply to a correspondent who, in respect of the Corpus Hermeticum, enquired about my translation of terms such as ἀγαθός and νοῦς. I have, for publication here, added a footnote which references my translations of and commentaries on five tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum.

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Notes

[1] G.R.S Mead. *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*. Theosophical Society (London). 1906.

[2] B. Copenhaver. *Hermetica*. Cambridge University Press. 1992

[3] My translation of and commentary on tractates I, III, IV, and XI - and the two appendices - is available in pdf format at https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/03/08/corpus-hermeticum-i-iii-iv-xi/

My translation of and commentary on tractate VIII is available in pdf format at https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/03/20/corpus-hermeticum-viii/

[4] To be pedantic, when θεὸς is mentioned in the texts it often literally refers to 'the' theos so that at the beginning of tractate VI, for example, the reference is to 'the theos' rather than to 'god'.

[5] In respect of 'the good' - τὸ ἀγαθόν - as 'honourable', qv. Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, LXXI, 4, "summum bonum est quod honestum est. Et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt."

[6] The suggestion seems to be that 'the theos' is the origin, the archetype, of what is noble, and that only through and because of theos can what is noble be presenced and recognized for what it is, and often recognized by those who are, or that which is, an eikon of theos. Hence why in tractate IV it is said that "the eikon will guide you,"; why in tractate XI that "Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos [the eikon] of Aion, the Sun [the eikon] of Aion, and the Sun [the eikon] of mortals," and why in the same tractate it is said that "there is nothing that cannot be an eikon of theos," and why in Poemandres 31 theos is said to "engender all physis as eikon."

As I noted in my commentary - qv. especially the mention of Maximus of Constantinople in respect of Poemandres 31 - I have transliterated εἰκὼν.

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Numinosity, Denotata, Empathy, And The Hermetic Tradition

The Numinous And Denotata

The intuition, the personal experiencing, of the numinous is in my fallible opinion of fundamental importance in understanding our physis (φύσις) as human beings and our relation to Being, the source of beings, sentient or otherwise.

As I noted in my 2018 essay *From Mythoi To Empathy* [1], the term numinous derives from the classical Latin *numen* and denotes "a reverence for the divine; a divinity; divine power" with the word numen assimilated into English in the 15th century, with the English use of 'numinous' dating from the middle of the 17th century and used to signify "of or relating to a numen; revealing or indicating the presence of a divinity; divine, spiritual."

It thus has a wider meaning than that ascribed to it by Rudolf Otto in his *Das Heilige*. For him, it was manifest in the written words - 'the revelation' - of the Old and New Testaments of Christianity (qv. Das Heilige, chapters X, XI) as well as in Christian exegesis manifest in the preaching of individuals such as Martin Luther (Das Heilige, chapter XII) and in religious terms it involved 'worship' (Das Heilige, chapter XIII ff) and in philosophical terms was described by Kant's *a priori* (Das Heilige, chapter XVII). Yet Otto also wrote that is was *sui generis*, a personal emotion or feeling.

The wider meaning of the numinous results from our faculty of empathy which provides or can provide an individual intuition - a wordless-knowing or awareness - of the numinous, and as a personal human faculty empathy has a personal horizon and thus cannot be extrapolated from such a personal knowing into some-thing supra-personal be this some-thing denotata, including an ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος, [2] or an axiom (ἀρχή) or a source (αἴτιος) for some 'revelation' or ideology or similar manifestations constructed by and dependent on appellation. In the case of a 'revelation' the source is often named as God or a god/the god (θεὸς, ὁ θεὸς) who or which are often described by a myth or mythoi.

For such extrapolation by the very nature of - the causality inherent in - denotata results in eris, a discord of opposites: for every denotatum has or developes an opposite and thus can cleave physis, as Heraclitus poetically and somewhat enigmatically expressed:

> τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ᾽ ἐόντος ἀεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπείροισιν ἐοίκασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγεῦμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅκως ἔχει· τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιοῦσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὕδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται. [3]
>
> Although this naming and expression [which I explain] exists, human beings tend to ignore it, both before and after they have become aware of it. Yet even though, regarding such naming and expression, I have revealed details of how Physis has been cleaved asunder, some human beings are inexperienced concerning it, fumbling about with words and deeds, just as other human beings, be they interested or just forgetful, are unaware of what they have done. [4]
>
> εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ΄ ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα <χρεών> [5]
>
> One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord δίκη, and that beings are naturally born by discord. [6]

78 12. HERAKLEITOS

80 [62] Orig. c. Cels. VI 42 p. 111, 11 *εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ᾽ ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα* [χρεών?].

Thus δίκη is the natural balance of conflicting opposites and thus an ancestral way of reconciliation or of resolving conflict, often misunderstood as a 'unity of opposites' with a dialectic of opposites with its inherent causality thus mistakenly considered a means to understanding, development and a believed in concept of necessary change.

The notion of discord so being born by denotata sundering physis is also and perhaps better expressed by Anaximander who like Heraclitus has been much misunderstood:

> ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσίς ἐστι τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν [7]
>
> Where beings have their origin there also they cease to exist: offering payment to balance, one to another, their unbalance for such is the arrangement of what is passing. [8]

Which expresses the causality inherent in the beings - existents, ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος - that denotata brings-into-being. They are

unbalanced, and since they are causal entities will sooner or later pass away even though in their living through the thoughts and actions of mortals they usually manifest and bring-into-being discord: hence why Heraclitus wrote εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν.

This is in contrast to the individual wordless-knowing that empathy brings-into-being, and explains the fundamental flaw of Plato's ἔλεγχος which led for example to him having Protagoras saying that the poet Simonides does not speak 'correctly', οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγει [9] even though poetry could possibly be - as an intimation of the numinous - an attempt to wordfully presence what causal abstractions conceal, with the attempt by Socrates to dispute such an assertion by Protagoras seeming to fail. [10]

Which is perhaps why Aristotle (Metaphysics, 982β) quoted a saying attributed to Simonides: θεὸς ἂν μόνος τοῦτ᾽ ἔχοι γέρας which follows ἄνδρ᾽ ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι,

> It is hard to be a purely noble person [...] a god alone has that privilege [11]

With the context of Aristotle's quotation his statement,

> ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἡ σοφία περί τινας ἀρχὰς καὶ αἰτίας ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη, δῆλον. Metaphysics, 982α
>
> It is evident that sapientia is a knowing of axioms and of sources [12]

and because

> ἀλλ᾽ οὔτε τὸ θεῖον φθονερὸν ἐνδέχεται εἶναι, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί, οὔτε τῆς τοιαύτης ἄλλην χρὴ νομίζειν τιμιωτέραν. ἡ γὰρ θειοτάτη καὶ τιμιωτάτη: τοιαύτη δὲ διχῶς ἂν εἴη μόνη: ἥν τε γὰρ μάλιστ᾽ ἂν ὁ θεὸς ἔχοι, θεία τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἐστί, κἂν εἴ τις τῶν θείων εἴη. Metaphysics, 983α
>
> it is not possible for the divine to be envious; indeed, as the maxim goes: songsters make many a false claim; nor should any other [epistêmê] be considered the more honourable, for it is divine because honourable in just two ways: if epistêmê is of the divinity or of the divine. [13]

Which returns us to whether some poetry such as the lyric attributed to Simonides as preserved by Plato can, for we mortals, be an intimation of the numinous, as some music - such as the counterpoint of JS Bach - is believed by many musicians and others to be.

If we presume to substitute 'the numinous' for 'the divine' and for 'the divinity' (the theos) then an epistêmê is τίμιος - honourable, precious, worthy, prized - if it is of, if it presences, the numinous; and it is interesting to note that, well over a thousand years after Aristotle, τίμιος in the Greek Orthodox tradition implies 'holy' as in Τίμιος Σταυρός, the Holy Cross.

In addition, as Aristotle - citing an ancient maxim - writes: παροιμίαν πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί, 'songsters make many a false claim', and that because of both the nature of denotata and our physis as human beings.

Empathy, The Hermetic Tradition, And Our Human Physis

The reality of empathy in relation to the numinous is two-fold - jumelle, as is our physis as human beings according to the Corpus Hermeticism - because although a means to appreciate, to discover, to feel, to know, the numinous without the need for mythoi, denotata and the associated exegesis, dialectic and discord, it is unappreciated, underdeveloped.

° Empathy is unappreciated, because of our physis: as is explained using Greek mythoi and in terms of the mystic hermetic tradition, in the Pœmandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> "distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. Yet, although deathless and possessing full authority, the human is still subject to wyrd. Hence, although over the harmonious structure, when within become the slave. Male-and-female since of a male-and-female father, and wakeful since of a wakeful one [...] This is a mysterium esoteric even to this day." [14]

This is further explained, again using Greek mythoi and in terms of the hermetic tradition, in tractate XI, which returns us to Aristotelian honour and takes us to where σοφία - qv. the quotation from Metaphysics, 982α above - is personified and explained as manifesting the noble, the beautiful, good fortune (εὐδαιμονία), arête, and Aion:

> "The foundation of all being is theos; of their quidditas, Aion; of their substance, Kosmos. The craft of theos: Aion; the work of Aion: Kosmos, which is not just a coming-into-being but always is, from Aion. Thus it cannot be destroyed since Aion is not destroyable nor will Kosmos cease to be since Aion surrounds it.
>
> But the Sophia of theos is what?
>
> The noble, the beautiful, good fortune, arête, and Aion. From Aion to Kosmos: exemption from death, and continuance of substance.
>
> For that geniture depends on Aion just as Aion does on theos. Geniture and Kronos - in the heavens and on

> Earth - are jumelle; in the heavens, unchanging and undecaying; yet on Earth, changeable and decayable.
>
> Theos is the psyche of Aion; Aion that of Kosmos; the heavens that of the Earth. Theos is presenced in perceiveration, with perceiveration presenced in psyche, and psyche in substance, with all of this through Aion, with the whole body, in which are all the bodies, replete with psyche with psyche replete with perceiveration and with theos. Above in the heavens the identity is unchanged while on Earth there is changement coming-into-being
>
> Aion maintains this, through necessitas or through foreseeing or through physis, or through whatever other assumption we assume, for all this is the activity of theos. For the activity of theos is an unsurpassable crafting that no one can liken to anything mortal or divine [...]
>
> Observe also the septenary cosmos ordered in arrangement by Aion with its separate aeonic orbits. Everything replete with phaos but with no Fire anywhere. For fellowship, and the melding of opposites and the dissimilar, produced phaos shining forth in the activity of theos, progenitor of all that is honourable, archon and hegemon of the septenary cosmos." [15]

The essence of which, beyond mythoi, is (i) that our physis is both "male-and-female since of a male-and-female father" and (ii) that the numinous can be apprehended, presenced, by and through "the noble, the beautiful, good fortune, arête and Aion," with Aion understood as the eikon (εἰκὼν) of the Kosmos [16] and - qv. Tractate XI, 2-4 - the cause of changement coming-into-being on Earth and thus of what is changeable and decayable and thus dies.

Which changement coming-into-being, and its change and eventual decay applies, in the perspective of Aeons - of millennia - to denotata and what existents, such as ideologies and organized hierarchical religions, denotata has brought-into-being.

° Empathy is underdeveloped because it seems that for millennia we mortals - or more specifically, perhaps a majority of the males of our species - have neglected the reality of our physis being jumelle: both male-and-female, both masculous and muliebral, with such muliebral physis the geneture of empathy. [18] As described in terms of Greek mythoi and the hermetic tradition in the Pœmandres Tractate in relation to the seven spheres:

> "Those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Æther, the pnuema, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceiveration; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion.
>
> Now listen to the rest of the explanation you asked to hear. When the cycle was fulfilled, the connexions between all things were, by the deliberations of theos, unfastened. Living beings - all male-and-female then - were, including humans, rent asunder thus bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral. Directly, then, theos spoke a numinous logos: propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning, all you creations and artisements, and let the perceiver have the knowledge of being deathless and of Eros as responsible for death.
>
> Having so spoken, foreknowing - through wyrd and that harmonious structure - produced the coagulations and founded the generations with all beings spawning according to their kind. And they of self-knowledge attained a particular benefit while they who, misled by Eros, love the body, roamed around in the dark, to thus, perceptively, be afflicted by death." [19]

The masculous is evident in patriarchy, in patriarchal religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam; in denotata, in dialectical confrontation including Plato's ἔλεγχος, as well as evident in the desire, the masculous need, for competition and for armed and personal conflict. The muliebral is evident in personal virtues such as honour, benignitas, empathy, and wordless personal methodologies such as the epistêmê that is mystical contemplation.

The neglect of empathy is understandable since the masculous - as manifest for example in patriarchy, patriarchal religions, and denotata, codified as denotata has been in the ἰδέα and ideal of Empires and nation-States - has dominated mortal life for millennia to the detriment of the muliebral.

The Uncertitude Of Knowing

Empathy, with its personal horizon, is or can be the geniture of our Uncertitude Of Knowing as human beings, while the masculous is the geniture of that certitude of individual knowing that infuses codified denotata such as ideologies and organized hierarchical religions.

Thus, in terms of numinosity, empathy presents or can present to us in the immediacy of the personal moment an individual intimation or wordless knowing of the numinous, which intimation or knowing places our mortal life, and all we connect with it or is connected to it, into a supra-personal perspective which is a-causal and of Being itself, the source of beings and all being; of which Being we as a mortal are one finite deathful emanation. Which perspective brings with it or can bring with it the wordless knowing of the unwisdom of words.

Thus, while some mythoi Greek or otherwise, some mystical traditions ancient or otherwise, some poetry and some metaphysical speculations Greek or otherwise, can or may provide some insights into our physis, their wordfull expression or expressions are subject or have been subjected to exegesis, just as written expressions of religious-type revelations always are; with such exegesis more often than not the geniture of a certitude or certitudes of knowing.

Which returns us to the personal wordless knowing of empathy and its discoverable embedded uncertitude of knowing, with personal virtues such as honour and benignitas one means - an ancient epistêmê - to try to live according to such a wordless knowing, with personal honour a melding, a hermetic ἐναντιοδρομία, of masculous and muliebral thus returning us to the physis that was cleaved asunder and which in others is still being cleaved asunder.

According to an ancient saying attributed to Heraclitus which may contain a fallible intimation of this and possibly was one of first written intimations of it:

> πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα (Diogenes Laërtius, ix. 7)
>
> All by geniture is appropriately apportioned with beings bound together again by enantiodromia.

David Myatt
17.iii.22
v.3

°°°

[1] https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2018/01/04/from-mythoi-to-empathy

[2] The terms ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος refer to Plato's postulation of what has been termed 'forms' - of a type of metaphysical existent such as an 'idea' - with ἰδέᾳ used for both singular and plural instances, and εἶδος (singular) often used by Plato instead, as for instance at Phaedo 103ε, ὥστε μὴ μόνον αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ἀξιοῦσθαι τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὀνόματος εἰς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον.

In regard to the use of εἶδος and the postulation, cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, 1078β, 14-15, συνέβη δ᾽ ἡ περὶ τῶν εἰδῶν δόξα τοῖς εἰποῦσι διὰ τὸ πεισθῆναι περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῖς Ἡρακλειτείοις λόγοις ὡς πάντων τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀεὶ ῥεόντων', ὥστ᾽ εἴπερ ἐπιστήμη τινὸς ἔσται καὶ φρόνησις, ἑτέρας δεῖν τινὰς φύσεις εἶναι παρὰ τὰς αἰσθητὰς μενούσας: οὐ γὰρ εἶναι τῶν ῥεόντων ἐπιστήμην.

[3] Fragment 1, Diels-Krantz.

[4] A short commentary on my translation is available at https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/heraclitus-fragment-1/

[5] Fragment B80.

[6] I have transliterated πόλεμος, and left δίκη as δίκη because both πόλεμος and δίκη should be regarded, like ψυχή (psyche/Psyche) as terms or as principles in their own right (hence the capitalization), and thus imply, suggest, and require, interpretation and explanation. To render them blandly by English terms such as 'war' and 'justice' – which have their own now particular meaning(s) – is in my view erroneous and somewhat lackadaisical, since δίκη for instance could be, depending on context: the custom(s) of a folk, judgement (or Judgement personified), the natural and the necessary balance, the correct/customary/ancestral way, and so on.

[7] Diels-Kranz, 12A9, B1

[8] In respect of χρόνος, it is not here a modern abstract measurable 'time' but 'the passing' of living or events as evident in the Agamemnon:

> ποίου χρόνου δὲ καὶ πεπόρθηται πόλις 278
>
> Then - how long has it been since the citadel was ravaged?
>
> τίς δὲ πλὴν θεῶν ἅπαντ᾽ ἀπήμων τὸν δι᾽ αἰῶνος χρόνον 554-5
>
> Who - except for the gods - passes their entire life without any injury at all?

In respect of ἀδικία, here it simply implies unbalance in contrast to the balance that is δίκη. The translation 'disorder' - like 'order' for δίκη - is too redolent of some modern or ancient morality designed to manifest 'order' in contrast to its dialectical opposite 'disorder'.

[9] Protagoras, 339δ

[10] Relevant quotations from Simonides are at 339β, 339ξ and the poem by Simonides that Plato preserved is, in the version by J. Aars, Das Gedicht des Simonides in Platons Protagoras, 1888,

> Ἄνδρ᾽ ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι χαλεπόν,
> χερσίν τε καὶ ποσὶ καὶ νόῳ τετράγωνον, ἄνευ ψόγου τετυγμένον.
> <...>
> οὐδέ μοι ἐμμελέως τὸ Πιττάκειον νέμεται,
> καίτοι σοφοῦ παρὰ φωτὸς εἰρημένον: χαλεπὸν φάτ᾽ ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι.
> θεὸς ἂν μόνος τοῦτ᾽ ἔχοι γέρας: ἄνδρα δ᾽ οὐκ ἔστι μὴ οὐ κακὸν ἔμμεναι,
> ὃν ἀμήχανος συμφορὰ καθέλῃ.
> πράξας μὲν εὖ πᾶς ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός,
> κακὸς δ᾽ εἰ κακῶς <τις>,
> καὶ τὸ πλεῖστον ἄριστοι, τούς κε θεοὶ φιλῶσιν.
> τοὔνεκεν οὔ ποτ᾽ ἐγὼ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι δυνατὸν
> διζήμενος κενεὰν ἐς ἄπρακτον ἐλπίδα μοῖραν αἰῶνος βαλέω,
> πανάμωμον ἄνθρωπον, εὐρυεδοῦς ὅσοι καρπὸν αἰνύμεθα χθονός:
> ἐπὶ δ᾽ ὔμμιν εὑρὼν ἀπαγγελέω.
> πάντας δ᾽ ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω,
> ἑκὼν ὅστις ἔρδῃ
> μηδὲν αἰσχρόν: ἀνάγκῃ δ᾽ οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται.
> <...>
> <οὔκ εἰμ᾽ ἐγὼ φιλόμωμος> ἐξαρκεῖ γ᾽ ἐμοί,
> ὃς ἂν ᾖ κακὸς μηδ᾽ ἄγαν ἀπάλαμνος, εἰδώς γ᾽ ὀνησίπολιν δίκαν,
> ὑγιὴς ἀνήρ, οὐδὲ μή μιν ἐγὼ
> μωμήσομαι: τῶν γὰρ ἠλιθίων
> ἀπείρων γενέθλα:
> πάντα τοι καλά, τοῖσί τ᾽ αἰσχρὰ μὴ μέμικται.

The more recent arrangement and reconstruction cited as PMG 242 is somewhat different:

> ἄνδρ᾽ ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι
> χαλεπόν χερσίν τε καὶ ποσὶ καὶ νόῳ
> τετράγωνον, ἄνευ ψόγου τετυγμένον·
> <..>
> οὐδέ μοι ἐμμελέως τὸ Πιττάκειον
> νέμεται, καίτοι σοφοῦ παρὰ φωτὸς εἰ-
> ρημένον· χαλεπὸν φάτ᾽ ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι.
> θεὸς ἂν μόνος τοῦτ᾽ ἔχοι γέρας, ἄνδρα δ᾽ οὐκ
>
> ἔστι μὴ οὐ κακὸν ἔμμεναι,
> ὃν ἂν ἀμήχανος συμφορὰ καθέλῃ·
> πράξας μὲν γὰρ εὖ πᾶς ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός,
> κακὸς δ᾽ εἰ κακῶς [
> [ἐπὶ πλεῖστον δὲ καὶ ἄριστοί εἰσιν
> [οὓς ἂν οἱ θεοὶ φιλῶσιν.]
>
> τοὔνεκεν οὔ ποτ᾽ ἐγὼ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι
> δυνατὸν διζήμενος κενεὰν ἐς ἄ-
> πρακτον ἐλπίδα μοῖραν αἰῶνος βαλέω,
> πανάμωμον ἄνθρωπον, εὐρυεδοῦς ὅσοι
> καρπὸν αἰνύμεθα χθονός·
> ἐπί θ᾽ ὑμῖν εὑρὼν ἀπαγγελέω.
> πάντας δ᾽ ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω,
> ἑκὼν ὅστις ἔρδῃ
> μηδὲν αἰσχρόν: ἀνάγκαι
> δ᾽ οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται.
> <...>
> [οὐκ εἰμὶ φιλόψογος, ἐπεὶ ἔμοιγ᾽ ἐξαρκεῖ
> ὃς ἂν μὴ κακὸς ᾖ] μηδ᾽ ἄγαν ἀπάλαμνος, εἰ-
> δώς γ᾽ ὀνησίπολιν δίκαν,
> ὑγιὴς ἀνήρ: οὔ †μὴν† ἐγὼ
> μωμήσομαι· τῶν γὰρ ἠλιθίων
> ἀπείρων γενέθλα.
> πάντα τοι καλά, τοῖσίν
> τ᾽ αἰσχρὰ μὴ μέμεικται
>
> DL Page, Poetae Melici Graeci, Cambridge University Press, 1962

Such a reconstruction introduces the question of exegesis of not only texts but of such elements as grammar and how the personal revealing that is the wordless-knowing of empathy compares to the supra-personal wordful revealing that

can be or has been deduced from written texts, spoken words or methods such as Plato's ἔλεγχος.

[11] Socrates, in Protagoras, does not associate ἀληθής with ἀγαθός but with χαλεπός, which again introduces the question as to whether ἔλεγχος is a guide to the revealing that is ἀλήθεια and thus to understanding our φύσις as human beings.

[12] In respect of αἴτιος, here the term 'sources' is apt since 'cause' can impose a particular interpretation on the text, as in the causality of 'cause and effect'.

In respect of σοφία, the Latin sapientia is apposite, as in my translation of Tractates I and XIII of the Corpus Hermeticum [*Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. 2017 ISBN 978-1976452369] because in some contexts the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical context given what the English term 'wisdom' now, in common usage and otherwise, often denotes. As in Tractates I and XIII sapientia requires contextual - a philosophical - interpretation.

[13] Regarding my translation:

i) ἐπιστήμη: epistêmê - implying skill or experience, especially in a profession or type of work or in using a methodology - rather than 'science' or 'knowledge', since 'science' has too many modern connotations while 'knowledge' is somewhat vague. In respect of experience in general, qv. Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus, 1115: τῇ δ᾽ ἐπιστήμῃ σύ μου προύχοις τάχ᾽ ἄν που, "about this, your experience has the advantage over mine".

ii) ἀοιδός: songsters, not poets, qv. Hesiod, Theogony, 95 where it is associated with the Muses and Apollo:

> ἐκ γάρ τοι Μουσέων καὶ ἑκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
> 95ἄνδρες ἀοιδοὶ ἔασιν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κιθαρισταί,

iii) [epistêmê] is implied from the previous ἄνδρα δ᾽ οὐκ ἄξιον μὴ οὐ ζητεῖν τὴν καθ᾽ αὐτὸν ἐπιστήμην.

iv) Honourable is an accepted translation of τίμιος, with the English word honour dating from around 1200 and derived from the Latin honorem (refined, grace, beauty) via the Old French (and thence Anglo-Norman) onor/onur. An early use of the term occurs in a poem in Middle English by John Gower dating from c. 1393 which references the Greek warrior Achilles:

> And riht in such a maner wise
> Sche bad thei scholde hire don servise,
> So that Achilles underfongeth
> As to a yong ladi belongeth
> Honour, servise and reverence.
>
> Confessio Amantis. Liber Quintus vv. 2997-3001 (The Works of John Gower. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1901, edited by G.C Macaulay)

[14] Tractate I, 15-16. From my commentary on that tractate:

> *jumelle*. For διπλοῦς. The much underused and descriptive English word jumelle - from the Latin gemellus - describes some-thing made in, or composed of, two parts, and is therefore most suitable here [...]
>
> *deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal*. θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. Here, in respect of my choice of English words, I must admit to being influenced by Chapman's lovely poetic translation of the Hymn to Venus from the Homeric Hymns:
>
> That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man

In respect of οὐσιώδης, I prefer, given the context, 'inner' - suggestive of 'real' - rather than the conventional 'essential'; although 'vital' is an alternative translation here, suggested by what Eusebius wrote (c.326 CE) about φῶς [phaos] pre-existing even before the cosmic order, with φῶς used by Eusebius to mean Light in the Christian sense:

> τό τε φῶς τὸ προκόσμιον καὶ τὴν πρὸ αἰώνων νοερὰν καὶ οὐσιώδη σοφίαν τόν τε ζῶντα [Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 1, chapter 2]
>
> The Light of the proto-cosmos, the comprehension and vital wisdom existing before the Aeons

wyrd. For ἡ εἱμαρμένη. A much better choice, here, than either 'fate' or 'destiny' given how overused both those words now are and how their interpretation is also now so varied. An overview of how the concept may have been understood in the late Hellenic period (around the time the Hermetica was probably written) is given in the 2nd century CE discourse *De Fato*, attributed to Plutarch, which begins by stating that εἱμαρμένη has been described in two ways, as ἐνέργεια (vigorous activity) and as οὐσία (essence) -

> πρῶτον τοίνυν ἴσθι, ὅτι εἱμαρμένη διχῶς καὶ λέγεται καὶ νοεῖται: ἡ μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἐνέργεια ἡ δ᾽ οὐσία

[...]

a mysterium esoteric. For κεκρυμμένον μυστήριον. The term mysterium - a truth or insight or knowledge about some-thing, which is considered religious and/or metaphysical ('hermetic') and which is unknown/unrevealed to or as yet undiscovered by others, and hence 'mysterious' to them - expresses the meaning of the Greek here (as the word mystery by itself does not). Likewise in respect of esoteric - kept concealed or which is concealed/hidden to most or which is revealed to an individual by someone who already 'knows' what the mysterium in question is.

Hence why I write *a* mysterium here rather than *the* mysterium, and why "a mysterium, esoteric even to this day", is better than the rather bland "the mystery kept hidden until this very day"

[15] Tractate XI, 3-7

[16] In respect of eikon, as I wrote in my commentary on Tractate I (Pœmandres), 32:

The meaning and significance of [εἰκὼν] are often overlooked and often lost in translation. I have transliterated εἰκὼν as here it does not only mean what the English words 'image' or 'likeness' suggest or imply, but rather it is similar to what Maximus of Constantinople in his *Mystagogia* [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence.

According to the hermetic weltanschauung, as outlined by Pœmandres here, all physis - the being, nature, character, of beings - their essence beyond the form/appearance their being is or assumes or is perceived as - re-presents (manifests, is an eikon of) theos. That is, the physis of beings can be considered not only as an emanation of theos but as re-presenting his Being, his essence. To recognize this, to recognize theos, to be in communion with theos, to return to theos, and thus become immortal, there is the way up (anados) through the seven spheres."

[17] The masculous and the muliebral are outlined in my 2019 essay *Physis And Being: An Introduction To The Philosophy Of Pathei-Mathos*, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/collected-works-2/physis-and-being/.

[18] The unusual English word geniture expresses the essence of γένεσις: that which or those whom have or derive their being (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else. It also avoids comparisons with the Biblical use of the English 'genesis'.

[19] Tractate I, 18-19.

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A Note Concerning θειότης

The Greek term θειότης occurs in tractate XI (section 11) of the Corpus Hermeticum – θειότητα μίαν – where I translated the term as "divinity-presenced." [1]

Plutarch, in De Pythiae Oraculis – qv. 407a, 398a-f – uses the word in relation to the oracle at Delphi with divinity-presenced also a suitable translation there.

The context of θειότης in tractate XI is:

> καὶ ὅτι μὲν ἔστι τις ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα δῆλον· ὅτι δὲ καὶ εἷς, φανερώτατον· καὶ γὰρ μία ψυχὴ καὶ μία ζωὴ καὶ μία ὕλη. τίς δὲ οὗτος; τίς δὲ ἂν ἄλλος εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός; τίνι γὰρ ἄλλωι ἂν καὶ πρέποι ζῶια ἔμψυχα ποιεῖν, εἰ μὴ μόνωι τῶι θεῶι; εἷς οὖν θεός. †γελοιότατον†· καὶ τὸν μὲν κόσμον ὡμολόγησας ἀεὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἕνα καὶ τὴν σελήνην μίαν καὶ θειότητα μίαν, αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν θεὸν πόστον εἶναι θέλεις [2]
>
> It is evident someone is so creating and that he is One; for Psyche is one, Life is one, Substance is one.
>
> But who is it?
>
> Who could it be if not One, the theos? To whom if not to theos alone would it belong to presence life in living beings?
>
> Theos therefore is One, for having accepted the Kosmos is one, the Sun is one, the Moon is one, and divinity-presenced is one, could you maintain that theos is some other number?

The "one" referred to in tractate XI is most probably the μονάς, Monas (Monad) as in tractate IV. As I noted in my Introduction to that tractate [1], John Dee used the term monas in his *Testamentum Johannis Dee Philosophi summi ad Johannem Gwynn, transmissum 1568*, a text included in Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, published in 1652.

An interesting part of tractate IV is:

> μονὰς οὖσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἑτέρου ἀριθμοῦ.
>
> The Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos without itself being enfolded by any, begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any.

In respect of arithmos, ἀριθμὸς, as I noted in my commentary on tractate IV:10 and on XII:15, [1] the usual translation is 'number' but which translation is, in those instances in the Corpus Hermeticum, somewhat inappropriate and unhelpful.

Similar to – but conveying a different meaning to – θειότης is the Greek term θεότης. Different, because θειότης relates to θεῖος (divine, divinity), and θεότης to θεός (theos, the god).

The word θειότης also occurs – and only once – in the New Testament, in Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, 1.20, where it led to some theological discussions regarding how and *in what* God is manifest, since some commentators apparently mistakenly equated θειότης with θεότης. The Latin of Jerome is:

> invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur sempiterna quoque eius virtus et divinitas

which translates the Greek θειότης by the Latin *divinitas*, a word used by Cicero.

The Greek text of Romans, 1.20, as in NA28, [3] is:

> τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἥ τε ἀΐδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης

The Wycliffe translation:

> For the invisible things of him, that be understood, be beheld of the creature of the world, by those things that be made, yea, and the everlasting virtue of him and the Godhead.

King James Bible:

> For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead

Douay-Rheims, Catholic Bible:

> For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity

In contradistinction to such translations, were I to temerariously venture my own 'interpretation of meaning' of the Greek – that is, my non-literal translation – it would be along the following lines:

> Through the foundation of the Kosmos, those unseen beings of that Being were visible, apprehensible by the beings which that Being produced, as also the sempiternal influence of that Being, and divinity-presenced.

In which interpretation I have endeavoured to express the metaphysical – the ontological – meaning, and have taken αὐτοῦ – literally, "of him/his" – as "of that Being" thus avoiding "gender bias", qv. the appendix – *Concerning Personal Pronouns* – to my commentary on tractate VI. [1] Also, δύναμις is – at least in my fallible opinion – more subtle than the strident "might" or "power" translations impute, suggesting instead "influence" as in tractate III:1, where it interestingly occurs in relation to θεῖος:

> δυνάμει θείαι ὄντα ἐν χάει, by the influence of the numen

My translation of tractate III:1 is as follows:

> The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis. The origin of what exists is theos, who is Perceiveration and Physis and Substance: the sapientia which is a revealing of all beings. For the numinal is the origin: physis, vigour, incumbency, accomplishment, renewance. In the Abyss, an unmeasurable darkness, and, by the influence of the numen, Water and delicate apprehending Pnuema, there, in Kaos. Then, a numinous phaos arose and, from beneath the sandy ground, Parsements coagulated from fluidic essence. And all of the deities <particularize> seedful physis.
>
> Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῖον καὶ φύσις θεία. ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων ὁ θεός, καὶ νοῦς καὶ φύσις καὶ ὕλη, σοφία εἰς δεῖξιν ἀπάντων ὤν· ἀρχὴ τὸ θεῖον καὶ φύσις καὶ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἀνάγκη καὶ τέλος καὶ ἀνανέωσις. ἦν γὰρ σκότος ἄπειρον ἐν ἀβύσσωι καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ πνεῦμα λεπτὸν νοερόν, δυνάμει θείαι ὄντα ἐν χάει. ἀνείθη δὴ φῶς ἅγιον καὶ ἐπάγη †ὑφ' ἅμμωι† ἐξ ὑγρᾶς οὐσίας στοιχεῖα καὶ θεοὶ πάντες †καταδιερῶσι† φύσεως ἐνσπόρου.

Which, for me at least, seems to place the use of θειότης in Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* into the correct Hellenic – Greco-Roman – metaphysical context.

David Myatt
28.iii.18

This article is a revised version of part of a personal reply sent to a life-long friend in answer to a specific question.

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[1] D. Myatt. *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. Translations And Commentaries. CreateSpace. 2017. ISBN 978-1976452369.

[2] The Greek text is from A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Paris, 1972.

[3] Nestle-Aland. *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th revised edition. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart. 2012.

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